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MEAN MACHINES SEGA

BITCHIN'!

ALIEN TRILOGY SCOOP REVIEW



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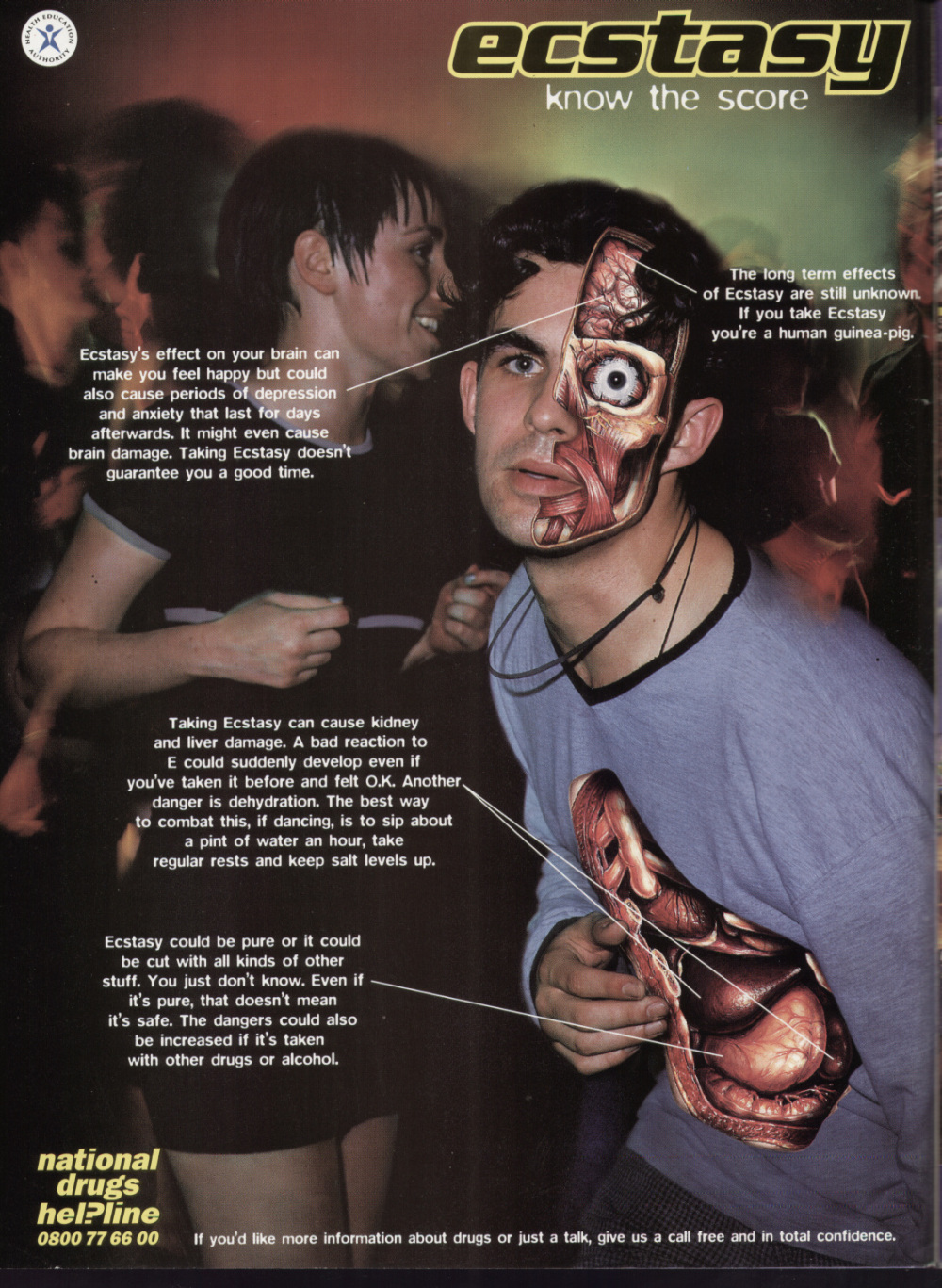
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SOARAWAY SATURN REVIEW

NiGHTS into dreams...

1ST FOR SATURN

EXHUMED • ACTUA GOLF • STORY OF THOR 2 • NBA ACTION
ROAD RASH • PRIMAL RAGE • PINBALL GRAFFITI • TANK



HEALTH EDUCATION AUTHORITY
ecstasy
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The long term effects of Ecstasy are still unknown. If you take Ecstasy you're a human guinea-pig.
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A YEAR OF SATURN

















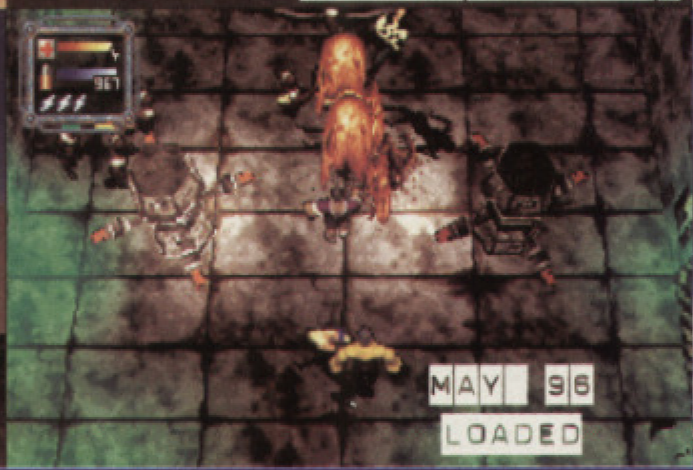












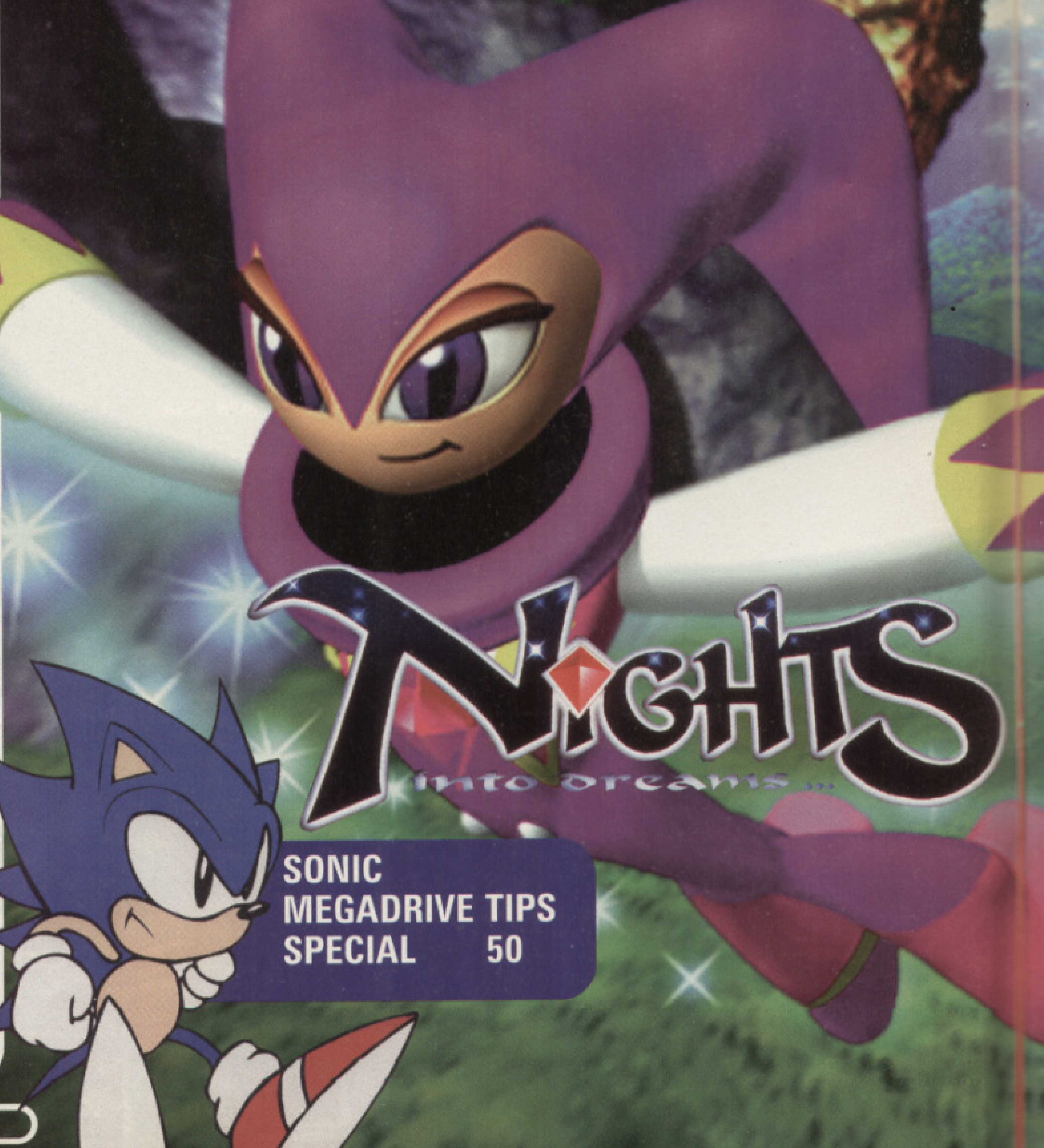


(WE'VE ONLY JUST BEGUN)

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AT A GLANCE

All games are Saturn format unless otherwise specified.

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MEGADRIVE

EDITORIAL

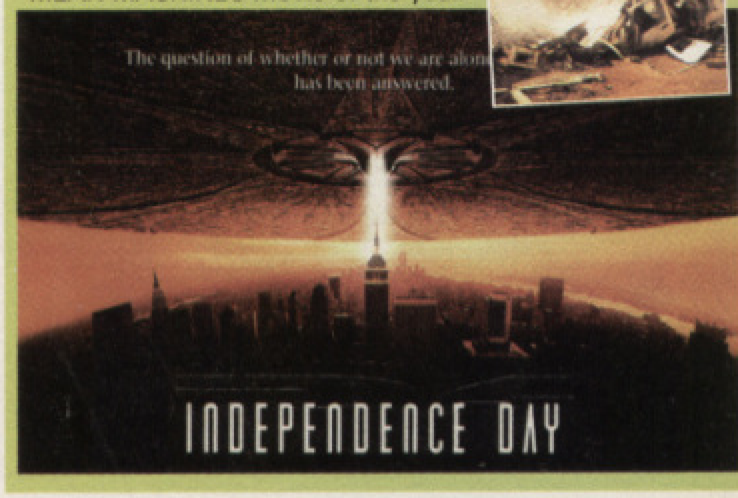
In the four years I've been on MEAN MACHINES, I can't quite recall a game line-up as excellent as this. We clinched Soviet Strike at the beginning of the month with a revealing interview, and Acclaim pulled out the stops to bring you Alien Trilogy before we went to press. Sandwiched in between these two massive titles is NiGHTS, a dazzling display of what the best developers in the world can do for Saturn. Sonic Team say they wanted to let players experience the dream sensation of flight, and NiGHTS is literally an uplifting experience to play. Hard to believe that next month shows every promise of being better, with an earth-shattering 70% complete version of Fighting Vipers waiting at Sega for our perusal. I'd also like to bring your attention to our exclusive Tomb Raider comic strip, which will be running from now until the game is released. Arrange yourself a rendezvous with Lara! Until next month.



GUS

INDEPENDENCE DAY

Those nice people at Twentieth Century Fox took us to see a preview of Independence Day (ID4). The new alien invasion movie is officially the most successful film ever, having put more bums on seats than even Jurassic Park! "The alien mothership effects were ace," says Dan, who was well impressed, "although the plot and dialogue were cheesier than a mouldy Wotsit!" It'll be arriving at a cinema near you any day now, and on your Saturn some time after that. Go see it – it's neck and neck with Toy Story for MEAN MACHINES movie of the year.



THIS SPORTING STRIFE

You can't walk in the MEAN MACHINES office without falling over multi-sports games at the moment. A pile of worn out joypads is testament to the popularity these button bashing frenzies. But what are the team like at the real thing?



GUS

"Judo was the only sport I was really interested in when I was lad," says Gus. "I did it for about three years, thinking it would turn me into Bruce Lee. For the good it did me I might as well have been Bruce Forsyth – this was very forcefully brought home to me after my second lesson. After each class we had half an hour to practice the skills we'd supposedly learned. I was only 11, weighed about 5 stone and really didn't know what I was doing. I was challenged by this hulk of a 20-year old who wiped the floor with me. I remember sitting in the back of my dad's car on the way home, reeling from concussion. I ended up falling out of the car and throwing up everywhere. My dad laughed. Tee hee."





CLAIRE

"I used to be really fit," says Claire, who recently gave up her membership of the local gym after three months of opting for pasta over push-ups every lunch time. "When I was 12 I went on a 20 mile horse ride. I would have continued horse riding if it wasn't for a distressing experience. My mum had just bought me all this really smart riding gear which I was really proud of. Unfortunately I fell off my horse and spent nearly a mile getting dragged along the ground behind it. My jodhpurs were ruined and I had a really sore bum for weeks." Since quitting the gym, Claire has been all the more determined to pursue her interest in sports. Only last week she got cable TV installed so she could watch Lunchbox Volleyball.





MARCUS

"All that multi-sports button-bashing was much easier in the old days," says Marcus. "At least the keys on my ZX Spectrum were made of rubber." Before he launches into one of his speeches about how games were better when they were made of wood, he remembers a school sports day story. "I usually tried to get out of it with a forged note from my mum, but on this occasion I was stuck in this bizarre egg and spoon race that you had to run with both feet inside a sack. I only got away with it by jumping on the back of other people's sacks to slow them down." It is this underhanded sneakiness that earns Marcus a lookalike picture of Doctor Who bad guy the Master. "That was Dan's idea of a joke. He'll have to go."



STAR TEST DAN JEVONS

A new, lean, and fighting fit MEAN MACHINES team is complete with the addition of our new staff writer Dan Jevons. The time has come for Master Jevons to take the spotlight for the first of many Editorial humiliations...



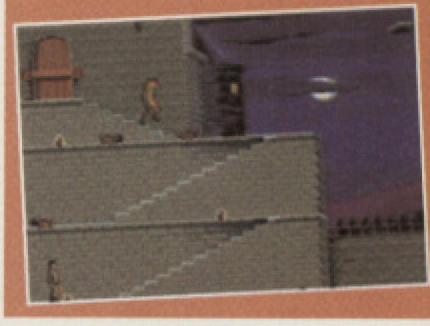
Name: "Manual" Daniel Jevons
Date of birth: 21st November 1973 (Nintendo day!)
Height: 6 foot 2
Weight: Light as a feather!
Marital status: Desperate
Hobbies: Films, snow boarding, bungy jumping, videogames.
Favourite games: Ghouls 'n' Ghosts, Street Fighter Alpha, Quake, Mario 64 (gulp!).
Favourite Sonic game: Sonic CD!
Favourite retro game: Defender.
Least favourite games: Dark Castle (Megadrive), Last Action Hero (SNES).
Most astonishing high score: Completed Panzer Dragoon Zwei with the type_1 dragon and 100% kill ratio.
Favourite films: Aliens, Miller's Crossing, The Usual Suspects, Reservoir Dogs, Hard Boiled.
Favourite member of Take That: Gary Barlow (the only talented one).
Most embarrassing record: Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles soundtrack.
Embarrassing school memory: Falling off the stage during a performance of Bugsy Malone!

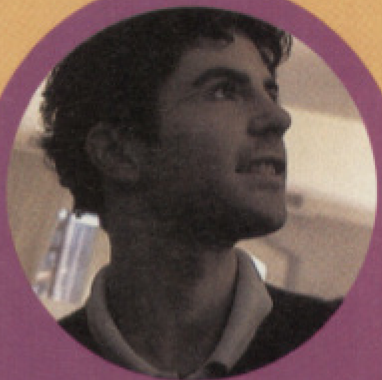


CAK CORNER



Cak Corner is a new regular feature turning the spotlight on the worst games in history. Each issue, we'll be giving away a tin of new Turd in a Can (tm) to the, er, lucky winner of our competition. This month's classic cak is the legendary Megadrive game Dark Castle. This dire platformer, released in 1991, had it all – worse graphics than a Master System, no scrolling, almost non-existent animation, migraine-inducing sound effects, tiny sprites and music that sounded like the noise cats make when you stand on their tails. So how can you win your spray turd? Simple. If you're a Dark Castle owner, simply send us a photo of the end sequence! Address your entries to Cak Corner – Dark Castle. What we decide to be the most entertaining description will win the poo. You've got till Monday 16 September and the usual competition rules apply. Good thing there isn't a rule about not doing crap competitions, hyuk hyuk hyuk.





NICK

Beyond recalling Preston's 5:1 thrashing at the hands of West Ham in 1977 (classic match, apparently) Nick hasn't got a lot to say about sport. He does highlight one profound truth, however. "Isn't it funny how, when you're at school, there's always a kid who gets called cruel names for having skiddy pants? Everybody knew one. It happened at my school – the kid was only 11 but an unfortunate incident in the changing rooms during PE revealed that things weren't all they should be in the pants department. They never let him forget for five years." So, Nick, how did you cope with this constant bullying? "Well, I tried to wear clean pants after that but, oh, erm, I think he was really upset, this bloke. Gutted he was. Gutted." Hmmm.



DAN

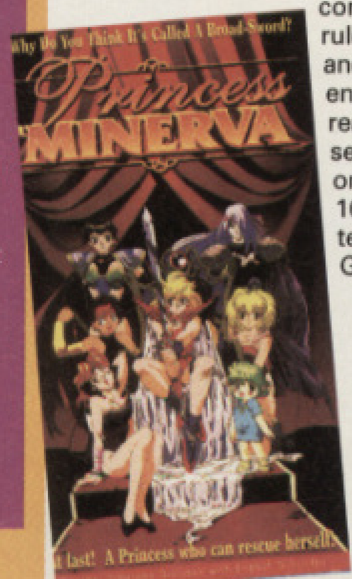
"When I was 13 I ran the Glastonbury marathon," says Dan. "It was only six miles long but we got so behind that we hitched a lift with my mate's grandad when we saw him passing. We pretended my mate had a sprained ankle so, out of sympathy, he dropped us off half way through the course. I think that my greatest sporting moment was down to skill, however. I was a last-minute sub in a water polo match at school and I scored a winning goal one minute before the final whistle. It was brilliant – I knocked the ball backwards, right over my head! It really impressed the chicks. I even got a kiss off Clare Burgess-Watson. And she was wearing a swimsuit, so you could really..." Yes, thank you Dan. We're sure it was lovely.

ANIME GIVEAWAY

AD Vision have just released the Japanese sword and sorcery classic Princess Minerva. This light-hearted Anime action video is on sale now, price £12.99. However, by entering our competition you could blag yourself one of five tapes that AD Vision have given us for our compo. To be in with a chance, simply...

Name one of the female characters from Streetfighter Alpha.

Put your answer on the back of a postcard or sealed down envelope and send it to **SAUCY SORCERY** at the editorial address. The usual competition rules apply, and all entries must reach us by second post on Monday 16 September. Good luck!



WATCHING THE DETECTIVES

HERCULE POIROT
Steve 'daft moustache' Merrett
INSPECTOR MORSE
Angus 'likes a laugh' Swan
JESSICA FLETCHER
Claire 'good for her age' Coulthard
COLUMBO
Marcus 'dirty mac' Hearn
JIM ROCKFORD
Nick 'bad collars' Paterson
SHERLOCK HOLMES
Dan 'elementary' Jevons

COMMISSIONER GORDON
Andy McVittie
MISS MARPLE
Lisa Merrett
EMMA PEEL
Tina Hicks (ta da!)

PRIVATE DICKS
Radion Automatic
Tom Cox

Q & A PHOTOGRAPHY: Victoria Upton

Special thanks to: Susie and co at Core Design, Simon Smith-Wright at Acclaim. Maz for the discs and, of course, Andrea at EA for her infinite patience!

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FAX: 0171-972 6701
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IMPORTANT: We've been inundated with queries about Shining Wisdom since the game's recent UK release. We regret that it's impossible to help you over the telephone, and suggest instead that you contact our back issue associates (phone number below) about the availability of issues 43, 44, 45 and 46. These issues contain our exhaustive four-part guide to the game.

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COMPETITION RULES
Employees and suppliers of EMAP IMAGES and their relatives are not eligible for competitions. There is no cash alternative for any of the prizes on offer. And you can forget those multiple entries too, fella!

MEAN MACHINES SEGA use Dolby Surround Sound to test out all featured software.

DOLBY SURROUND

NEWS

THIS TIME IT'S WAR!

MICRO MACHINES MILITARY

CODEMASTERS

MEGADRIVE

RELEASE NOVEMBER '96

ORIGIN: UK

Codemasters have unveiled their latest and last Micro Machines game for Megadrive, and it's going to be a blast! Micro Machines Military is heading for a November release and, in all probability, number one in the charts.

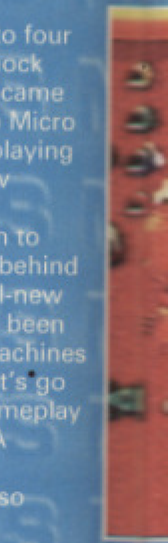
Codies themselves describe it as 'Honey I Shrunk the Armed Forces' – the characters get into cartoon uniform (Cherry becomes Forces' sweetheart) and jump into newly-armed vehicles, adding an entirely new angle to the gameplay. Three entirely new track areas; Farmyard, Sandpit and Forest Park, have been assembled for characters to race their tanks, gunboats, 'copters, urban warriors, APCs and more tooled up weaponry. With these they can blast their opponents off course. They also have to contend with indiscriminate fire coming from all new interactive scenery, turning picnic tables into war zones — biscuit-bomber bees, soldier ants and toy pistols blasting out jets of water.

The game supports eight-players using the established J-Cart system, and an entirely new mode of play that effectively splits the game in half. After the 30-odd racing tracks, come 20 battle arenas. In these, up to four players have a single objective — knock your player over the edge. The idea came in response to the gamer reaction to Micro Machines 2 and '96 – people loved playing dirty on the sponge rides and narrow ledges.



Richard Eddy at Codemasters is keen to point out that Supersonic Software (behind the previous titles) are creating an all-new game, not an update. "It would have been easy for us to slap together Micro Machines '97, but we thought, what the hell, let's go out with a bang! And the combat gameplay adds so much". There are some AAA Megadrive games on the way this Christmas, but none will be awaited so keenly as the new Micro Machines.





JUPITER MOON

GANYMEDE

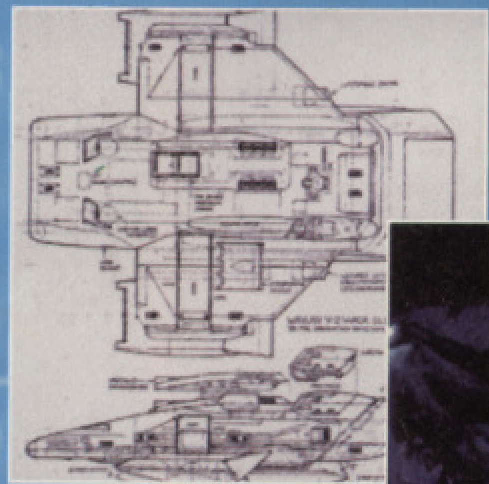
BY: BMG

SATURN

RELEASE: 1997

ORIGIN: USA

Ganymede is the work of Rocket Science, a developer who achieved overnight star status, then quickly fell to earth when their first game, Loadstar, got 3% in this very mag (and was consequently canned). They've now reinvented themselves and are working on some ambitious projects eventually destined for Saturn. Ganymede is a 3-D polygon blaster set on the moon of Jupiter of that name, with honest to goodness aliens, a highly manoeuvrable 'vapor sled' and some fast-moving lunar topography graphics. Our privileged look was at a very early version.





Today's headlines... Micro Machines: The Next Generation, Crossroads in space; D in Spain and The Incredible Hulk in a new sequel. Set in neither space nor Spain. Now you've been introduced, meet this month's news...

KEY

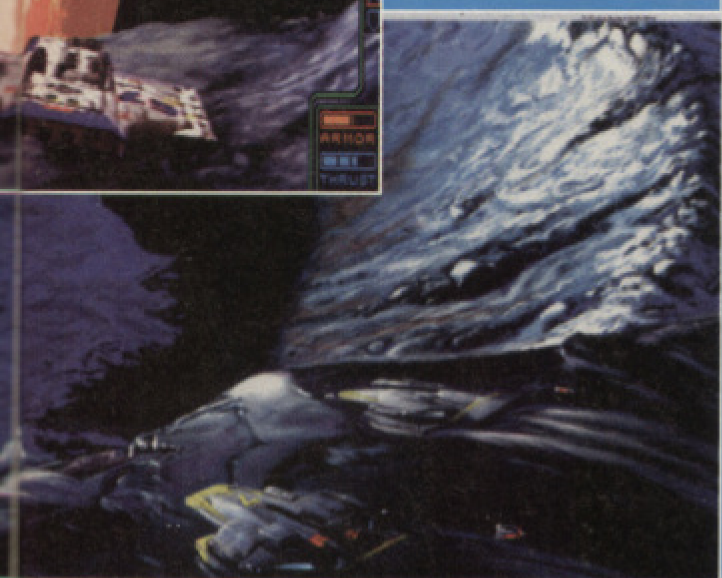
competition · new game · japan news · tipped for the top · exclusive news · film news · news update · arcade conversion · gossip · british development







Those who remember the highly dodgy "Neighbours meets Crossroads in space"-type scenario of the satellite-only soap opera Jupiter Moon will be relieved to learn that this has absolutely nothing to do with it.



SPANISH TRAGEDY

TORICO

BY: SEGA

SATURN

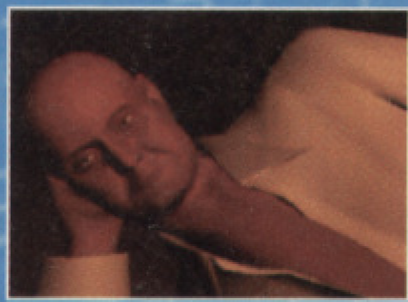
RELEASE: TBA

ORIGIN: JAPAN

Rendered CD adventures like D do not have the same popularity here as in Japan, but Sega reckon they can cause a stir with Torico, an intriguing new two disc adventure with a distinctly latin theme. As the game only exists in Japanese form, the plot is unclear, but the game begins with you sharing a prison cell with an intense bald man.

Soon you're trolling around a large Spanish-style town, meeting equally weird inhabitants, getting stabbed and solving puzzles. The game has an unsettling, mature ambience, and quite a bit of mystery, and seems larger in scale than comparable games of this type. The English translation is underway, and the dedicated band of fans of this type of game should expect it before Christmas.













CRIMINAL CLASS

CRIME WAVE

BY: DOMARK

SATURN

RELEASE: SEPTEMBER

ORIGIN: UK



When did Domark last release a Sega game? Dunno, but who cares, because soon they're releasing Crime Wave. We're promised a futuristic gangster fest viewed from a Micro Machines-style perspective. You roam around eight city zones in one of the many vehicles on offer, killing people, wrecking things and generally gaining the status as an all-round bad egg. The game dumps traditional level objectives by developing as you go, with upgrade options and more complex missions for successful players. Domark think Crime Wave's mix of rotational isometric graphics and clever AI programming will be a winner. We should know whether to agree by next month.





GREEN'S BACK

INCREDIBLE HULK: PANTHEON SAGA

BY: US GOLD

SATURN

RELEASE: AUTUMN '96

ORIGIN: UK



The once mighty comic hero, Incredible Hulk, is revived to rip perfectly good shirts again in US Gold's new license. Pantheon Saga is an original Hulk adventure being assembled by Attention to Detail, a UK coder based near US Gold's own developer. An early version seen at E3 shows how ATD are mucking about with conventional viewpoints, mixing 2-D and 3-D platforming, adding puzzle elements to character combat. Over five levels Hulk makes his way from a Scottish castle to an Antarctic wilderness. We await to see the scene where he checks in for his flight.



PLANE CRAZY

VARIOUS

BY: VARIOUS

SATURN

RELEASE: TBA

ORIGIN: JAPAN



For those who love the trusty old 2-D shoot 'em up, the popularity of that genre seems to show no signs of flagging in Japan. A spate of vertical scrollers has appeared over the last couple of months, including Don Pachi, Strikers 45 from Atlus software and Sonic Wings, a conversion of the NEO GEO arcade module. Though nothing groundbreaking to western eyes, there's tons of good old-fashioned gameplay in these, and Sega are looking at some as possible releases here. They've already signed up Darius 2, the sequel to the Acclaim horizontal scroller.







RETURN OF THE JOCK

Britain's one and only (well now the others have been canned it is) games show Gamesmaster returns in the autumn with the perennial Loaded reader and bon viveur Dominik Diamond taking the mike again and entertaining us during the modem pool 'challenges'. Dexter Fletcher is but a distant memory, and this sixth (!) series wants to improve on the format further — with your help. If you want to suggest any item for the show, celebrities, challenges, us as executive producers, write to; Gamesmaster, PO Box 91 London E14 9GT.

CHAMBER POT

BLAST CHAMBER

BY: ACTIVISION

SATURN

RELEASE: AUTUMN '96

ORIGIN: USA



We could have brought you this last month, but we lost the shots! Anyway, this is Blast Chamber, a highly innovative twist on the platform blaster in that it takes place in a single room. More accurately, a giant rotating cube, so that walls become floors, then walls again. Up to four players charge around this stomach-churning environment trying to kill each other. Sounds good to us, and should be ready in a couple of months.

SHE GOT LEGS

SPIDER
BY: BMG
SATURN
RELEASE: MARCH '97
ORIGIN: USA





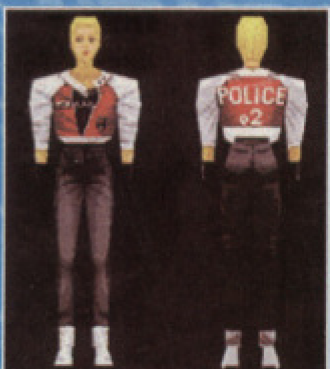
BOSS Studios is an award-winning developer assembling a blockbuster for BMG under the title Spider. Sensibly enough, the game stars a hardy arachnid making his way through platform levels filled with predators and prey at the budget end of the foodchain. Luckily, this cyber spider has his own armoury of sophisticated weaponry. Unluckily, so do all the vermin and creepy crawlies. The game looks sumptious, with eye-catching 3-D camera and polygon backgrounds, perhaps justifying BOSS' bullish claims. A feature look soon.



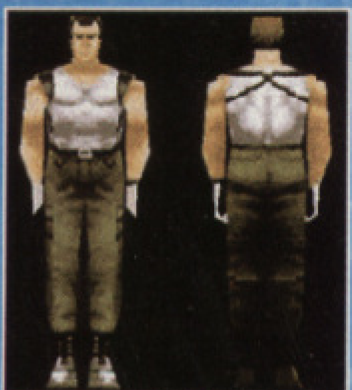


EXPLOSIVE

SPIDER
BY: BMG
SATURN
RELEASE: MARCH '97
ORIGIN: USA







Rumours on the net of a new ST-V/Saturn beat 'em up, Dynamite Detectives, abound, and the first pictures of this American project are available. It's a Streets of Rage-style scroller, with polygon characters and enemies, but with the combatants carrying weapons. There's a beefy man and a foxy chick (known as, no kids, Sexy Dynamite Detective). This is a potential high scorer in playability. More news soon.

GOSSIP!

One net rumour which MEAN MACHINES is happy to clarify is the possibility of a Saturn 'Streets of Rage'. The game in question is being assembled by the two man team who created Thunderhawk 2 (their 'awesome game' mentioned in last month's gossip). Sega are currently in negotiations of whether the beat 'em up could use SOR characters as technically, their third-party development arm are mightily impressed. Sega are very busy snapping up publishing deals on big games to get them out before the Playstation. The biggest of these is Tomb Raider, which Core are planning to launch at a party in Egypt! We'll be there... Also Ocean's Tunnel B1 is back on track. Sega are also interested in taking in a lot more titles for release and are evaluating a clutch of Japanese import games at present. One game we've recently been informed will not be arriving after all is Firo and Klawd, the ambitious cartoon adventure being created by Dizzy coders, the Oliver twins. However, our last month story making mischief about GT Interactive has happily been refuted. GT have four more planned releases for Saturn in 1996, including Doom, although Quake will slip to 1997 because of delays with the PC version (which is currently 'doing it' for all shareware network players). Two more huge games that have yet to come to Saturn are the subject of all sorts of speculation — sources claim both Fade To Black and Resident Evil are being converted, though the latter will take well into 1997, due to the technical differences between machines.

CREAM OF SEGA

OFFICIAL CHARTS © ELSPA COMPILED BY CHART TRACK

I've got a theory. I reckon that absolutely none of you lot bother to read the intro to Cream of Sega. In fact, I reckon that we could leave it exactly the same for month after and month and no-one would be any the wiser. It's getting to be like a broken record anyway: 'spin the platters that matter, Euro '96, Brian Lara Cricket etc'. Ah well. Nice to see Panzer Dragoon Zwei and Need for Speed are doing well. As usual, thanks to ELSPA, Chart-Track and you, the readers, without whom we wouldn't be doing this.

HYPE CHART

The games we, and you, voted as our most eagerly awaited

1 (2)
NIGHTS
With the new pad this game is unbelievable!

2 (-)
SOVIET STRIKE
Seems our news piece had you frothing at the mouth.

3 (3)
ALIEN TRILOGY
Better than the PlayStation version!

4 (4)
FIGHTING VIPERS
Sega have a 70% complete version on show. It's almost ready!

5 (5)
DAYTONA CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION
Latest info is: no more cheesy tunes.

HAVE YOUR SAY

Thanks for the huge response to our readers' charts. Each month we list the games you most want and those you are looking forward to. Just fill in the coupon. Also, take a guess at what the most popular game of the month will be. One of those smart enough to guess the top of the reader's chart will win a copy of that game! Congratulations to last month's winner, Steven Pegg from Ross-on-Wye.

MY TOP THREE SATURN GAMES ARE:

I'M MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO:

I PREDICT THE MOST POPULAR GAME WILL BE:

NAME:
ADDRESS:

Send to: Cream of Sega, MEAN MACHINES SEGA, EMAP Images Ltd, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

SALES CHART: SATURN

Chart Track's guide to the best-selling CDs.

1 (1)
EURO '96 (Sega)
Holds its ground, but will Olympic Soccer put one past?

2 (-)
THE NEED FOR SPEED (EA)
Top racing action straight in at number 2.

3 (4)
PANZER DRAGOON ZWEI (Sega)
Top blasting action. On a dragon!

4 (5)
SEGA RALLY (Sega)
Want to hear a joke? Ridge Racer's better than Sega Rally! Ho ho ho.

5 (3)
VIRTUA COP (Sega)
The best gun game ever! Except for Cop 2 of course.

6 (-)
GUARDIAN HEROES (Sega)
What??! Number 6? Buy more you fools, buy more!

7 (7)
VIRTUA FIGHTER 2 (Sega)
A Megadrive Virtua Fighter is on the way.

8 (-)
BAKU BAKU ANIMAL (Sega)
Cute puzzle action par excellence.

9 (7)
VIRTUA FIGHTER 2 (Sega)
Best game ever? Probably...

10 (2)
STREET FIGHTER ALPHA (Capcom/Virgin)
Best 2D beat 'em up ever? Definitely!

ELSPA

OFFICE CHART SATURN

Our choice of the next generation titles.

1 (-)
NIGHTS: INTRO DREAMS
Sega's flagship title is a masterpiece.

2 (2)
EXHUMED
Believe us, this is something special.

3 (-)
STREET FIGHTER ALPHA
New boy Dan can't get enough of it!

4 (-)
LEGEND OF THOR
Gus has been laying seige to this adventure.

5 (5)
SEABASS FISHING
Enjoyed a new lease of life when we found we could go dolphin hunting!

SALES CHART: MEGADRIVE

Chart Track's guide to 16-bit sales.

1 (1)
BRIAN LARA CRICKET '96 (Codemasters)
Peel my tangerines, what a surprise!

2 (3)
FIFA SOCCER '96 (EA)
Base my steaming puddings. Another shocker.

3 (2)
TOY STORY (Sega)
There's definitely a sense of deja vu about this month's top three.

4 (-)
OLYMPIC SUMMER GAMES (THQ)
Break some world records with a mate.

5 (-)
PETE SAMPRAS TENNIS '96 (Codemasters)
Strawberries and cream abound.

6 (9)
MICRO MACHINES 2 (Codemasters)
Codies' classic just won't go away!

7 (-)
PGA TOUR GOLF '96 (EA)
Utterly brilliant golf 'em up.

8 (5)
TAZMANIA: ESCAPE FROM MARS (Sega)
You can't get enough of the old devil.

9 (4)
SONIC & KNUCKLES (Sega)
Back, at a bargain price.

10 (7)
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The best multi-player game going!

ELSPA

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Your choice of the best Saturn titles.

1 (3)
SEGA RALLY
Its F'in ace! Its H to the Max!

2 (2)
VIRTUA FIGHTER 2
Still the best fighting game around.

3 (-)
PANZER DRAGOON ZWEI
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4 (-)
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What about Euro '96?

5 (-)
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Weird and wacky horror beat 'em up action!


BLAM!
-MACHINEHEAD
See! through the eyes of Dr Kimberly Stride as you ride the Vorpal Blade through an insane combination of shoot-em-up action, strategic objectives and B-movie melodrama. Gasp! with amazement at state-of-the-art virtual landscapes, tunnel systems and eye-popping FMV. Laugh! in the face of danger as you blast through fifteen adrenaline-pumping stages of sheer 3D exhilaration. Scream! with terror at horrific hordes of mutated polygonal enemies. Beg! for mercy as you face the Machinehead in the mother of all showdowns...
Play! Blam!-Machinehead! for the ride of your life.
Blam!-Machinehead
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TOMB RAIDER
THE WAY I SEE IT, THERE ARE ONLY TWO TYPES OF STRANGERS IN THE JUNGLE...
TYPE ONE TAKE A BACKPACK, SEE THE MONKEYS...
THEN SATISFIED, NEST CONTENTEDLY IN SUBURBIA...
THEN THERE'S THE SECOND TYPE...
HE HE HE
...THE INTERESTING TYPE...
THEY'LL SEIZE ON ANY SCENT...
SMAK!
NO LAUGHING!
...ANY FOOL...
...ON ANY TRAIL...
KRAK!



FOR THE KEY...
NO - NO YOU DON'T WANT THAT!
THE KEY TO ADVENTURE!
SNAP!!
PERSONALLY, I CHOOSE ONLY TYPE THE SECOND...
DON'T GO IN THERE ALONE SON!
HE WON'T!
HA!
HA!!
WHO THE DEVIL..?
NO TIME!
THOSE CRAZIES ALWAYS TAKE YOU WHERE YOU'VE NEVER BEEN BEFORE...

PROJECT	SOVIET STRIKE
PUBLISHER	ELECTRONIC ARTS
INITIATED	JUNE 1994
RELEASE	NOV 96
FORMAT	SATURN
DEVELOPERS	ELECTRONIC ARTS

SOVIET STRIKE



Few games have the right to expect cast-iron chart success. Soviet Strike is one of them. Four years of gaming excellence, critical acclaim and rabid expectation will come to a head with the release of the first 32-bit helicopter shoot 'em up from EA.
But Soviet Strike is not merely set to ride into gaming lore on the back of the reputation earned by the three Megadrive games. Two years of programming, with the 'Godfather of Strike', John Manley, breathtaking technical ingenuity and a crusade for good old fashioned playability and the American way ensure Soviet Strike of its own place in the sun.
Since Urban Strike the press has largely been kept in the dark until EA revealed the game at E3 in May. Then it became clear that the temptations of an out-and-out 3-D fest had been resisted. It also became clear to those who played the game for a short amount of time (it was already surprisingly together) that the essence of previous titles had been distilled into the new game.
You can judge for yourself in November, but first we bring you the exclusive thoughts of Michael Kosaka, Executive Producer, who spoke to us from EA's development base in San Mateo, California...







Three of the contrasting levels of Soviet Strike. Black Sea (top) pits you against floating Soviet might, Crimea and Kyhber are land areas.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL KOSAKA

Q: Where did the idea of a Soviet Strike game come from?

A: The Soviet angle came from the original three designers, Michael Becker, John Manley and Rob Swanson, who worked together to try and take 'Strike over to the 32-bit machines. They entertained a lot of different scenarios, different parts of the world, which is part of what the 'Strike thing is, trying to be topical, up to date, and the stuff that was happening in Eastern Europe was certainly exciting and that's what helped them arrive at the particular Soviet scenario.

Q: And when did they actually come up with the scenario?

A: Actually, design started, believe it or not, about two years ago. That seems like a long time ago, and it really was.

Q: You talk about topicality. When the idea was first developed people had no idea the communists might come back, but there's been a recent resurgence in Russia. Was that completely unexpected?

A: Art imitates life, or life imitates life — I'm not sure what the phrase is, but yeah, that was serendipitous. What we did was produce a sort of 'what if' scenario, and then things turn out the way they do, and that's always a fun part of what we do.

Q: You talked about other members of the design team, had they come from the original 'Strike series?

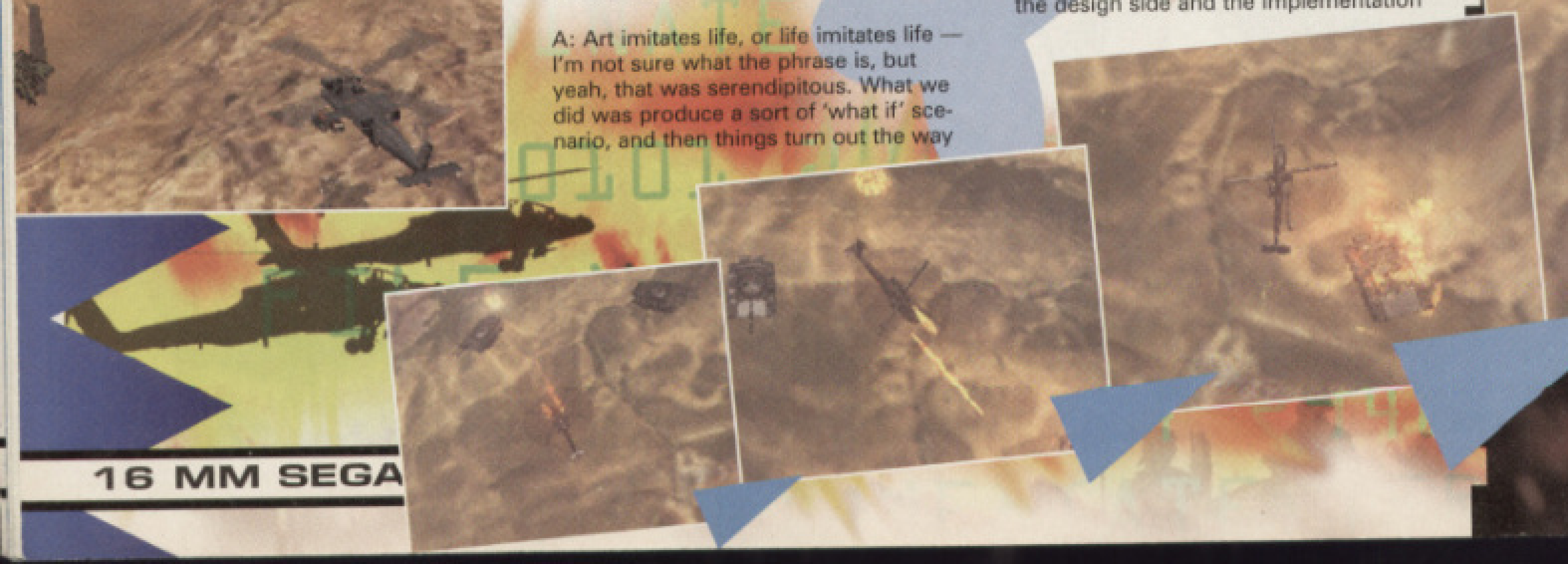
A: John Manley is the only one of those associated with all three previous versions, the Godfather of 'Strike, as it were!

Q: And he wanted to have a hands-on involvement with this one as well?

A: He absolutely has. John has seen us through it since day one.

Q: That leads on to the next question – how much of the project is inspired by the three 'Strike games? What are they key features that you would say players of the other three games would recognise?

A: One of the things that John and his team did was try to analyse, some people might say over-analyse, what exactly makes the 'Strike series interesting, gives it its longevity. So they dissected the three previous 'Strike versions from the design side and the implementation





It screamed in. With barely a minute to spare, in its inimitable style, Soviet Strike arrived to blow us away.



A Section of the landscapes the Soviet Strike team created as a basis for the backgrounds. They reveal how they are streaming data off CD to maintain the startling quality of these images.

side to discover the key features they thought were interesting. Also, they used some focus group results to help them to tear apart those pieces they thought would work really well. So, have they been inspired by the last three games? Absolutely, and they've learned a lot from each previous edition, and hopefully that will be reflected in this product also.

Q: The look of the game is very distinctive — a bit like, but also a bit not like, the old 'Strike game—

A: —Right! We've got a couple of primary views. One of them is behind the chopper, and you can switch to a 'classic Strike' view also. This was quite a conscious design not to try and do the first-person perspective. It's been done quite well on a lot of other games, and we thought if we did it, it would be a kind of 'me too' type thing. It really plays to our strength to keep a Classic 'Strike perspective as the game perspective and try and amplify that for the 32-bit. So it was a conscious decision not to go with the cockpit.

Q: But do you not worry people might look at the game at think it's not 'next generation' enough, because it looks a bit like conventional 16-bit games?

A: Well, absolutely, I would say that's a huge concern. But I think the software demonstrates that we're featuring a couple of new technologies. One of them is the way we are rendering the backgrounds which gives it a very unique look, and I don't think anyone else has done it on a 32-bit platform. It has fully rendered backgrounds making it look basically photo-realistic, and that's something which is very unusual. And I think that will carry the day for us as far as going forward with something that's taking a new angle on 32-bit machines. ►





Soviet Strike's rendered intro shows just how close the programmers have come to capturing a photo-realistic top down viewpoint, with the actual in-game graphics.

FALLEN EMPIRES

With the collapse of communism in Russia in the late 1980s, the Cold War was effectively over — the West had won. But the culture of spy stories, James Bond and the fear of 'reds under the bed' have never quite gone away. Soviet Strike takes us into a nightmare scenario where the real fanatics have seized control, abducted President Yeltsin and once again threatened the peace-loving world.
Just like the topical Desert Strike, which reared its controversial head when the Gulf War was a monumental world event, Soviet Strike skirts current political issues. Russia is still an unstable country, support for communist factions is increasing, and the idealogues of Stalinist ideas are once again becoming emboldened. A dangerous amount of nuclear weapons are left under no obvious control.
Into this emerging siutation comes the Strike team — a helicopter taskforce whose primary role is to deal with delicate missions and scenarios earmarked as suicidal. They are small, select and secret. No one learns of their successes, nothing is ever heard of their failures. They can adapt to any battlezone: Soviet Strike covers a vast area of the Russian and Eastern European landscape; Kyhber, Transylvania, Siberia and concluding in the capital itself, against the backdrop of the Kremiin.

Q: You're coding this on various formats at the same time. Does that create problems with the different results you can get out of a PC, Saturn and Playstation?

A: The Saturn conversion is being done by a really good group called Tiberon – they've surprised us with the incredible amount of good technology they've been able to find out for themselves. We've been repeatedly surprised by the performance of the Saturn, we've just been blown away with how they've managed to keep up with us. Despite a lot of tricks that can be done on the PSX you cannot do on the Saturn, they've pretty much been in step with what we're doing.

ON GAMEPLAY....

Q: Talking about more specific matters of gameplay, can you give us a view of the plot and structure of the game?

A: The 'Strike team is this covert military team assembled by governments to stop wars before they begin. In the case of Eastern Europe there's a bad guy, a madman trying to incite all kinds of bad things and your job is to get in there first and shut down all types of activity before they spread into a widespread war. Part of the fun, which hasn't been seen yet, but that we're including through the Full Screen Video, is the news story part of it, the political side of it, which I think is fascinating because we've got a key reporter, and she gives you the angle on it: when you succeed nobody knows about it and when you fail they cover it up, so it's an interesting little political thing generated as a background story to the whole deal. But the plot is basically save the world, don't let things get out of hand.

We've got five specific areas of Eastern Europe. In the order you'll go through them in the game there's; Crimea, The Black Sea, Khyber, one we call 'Dracula' which is Transylvania, and then to the capital itself. Now each of these is a very different type of environment and has different types of actual gameplay.

Q: Does the game still possess the mission within mission structure?

A: Really, that's something we thought was key. We like to see it as a "thinking man's shooter" – you really need to think about what you're doing, you need to plan ahead, and you just can't blow everything up. I think that gives us an edge that some other games may not have. Yeah, we have missions within missions. For each of the scenarios, you're going to be doing four or five different missions.

Q: Are there any plans to extend the longevity of the game after it's complete? Can you go back and find something different?

A: Well, we have that to an extent. We have scripted certain key things that go on – for instance, you can follow a particular truck to its destination and it will trigger another event. If you don't do that, it doesn't itself







For all its technical innovation, and new found mature gameplay status, Soviet Strike is a gutsy blaster at heart. This is what Michael calls 'mayhem'



The front end of the game uses the CD capacity in a way that was impossible in the previous Strike games. Sophisticated composites of CGI sequences and videos lays out all the weaponry in the game.

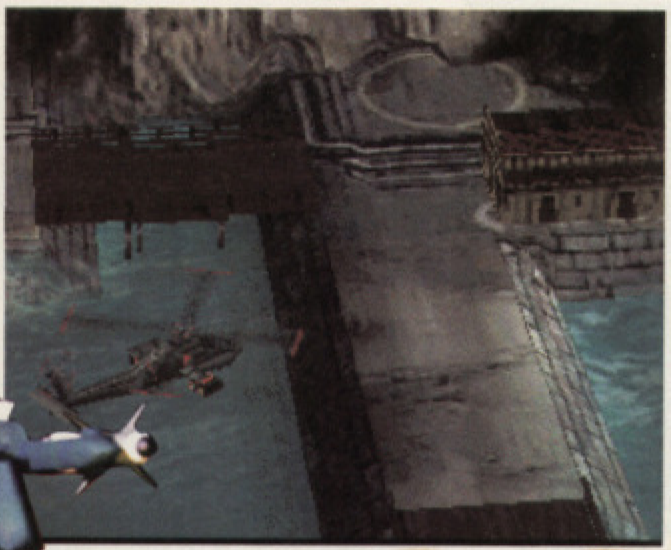


Your Apache's functions are revealed in the mission briefing sequences. Here the hook, used for resupply and rescue is shown at close range.



Scud launchers again rear their horrible heads.







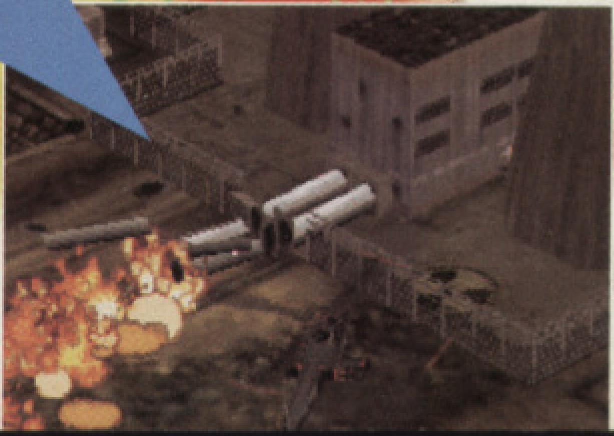
Here you get an idea of how the on-screen instrumentation keeps you informed without resorting to separate menus or getting in the way.

These pictures come from the 'Dracula' section, full of brooding Gothic towers, concentration camp surroundings and grim Bohemian villages.









end the game so you can miss it and there will be things you don't know you've missed. Hopefully talk through magazines and clues will persuade people to go back and play through things they've missed. There's also a lot of video here too, and you can go back and see slightly different 'trees of repsonses' to how well you're doing.

Q: In the previous games, there were other vehicles you could use. Will that feature in this game?

A: Unfortunately not. For this one we're going to stick with the Apache helicopter. In the sequel we have planned there will be a variety of other vehicles.

Q: Was that because of the work involved in setting up the game engine? Is it a bit like Desert Strike, which was the basic engine to which the sequels were embellishments?

A: You're right on. That's pretty much it — this is our learning curve, as it were, trying to concentrate on what we have. We'll expand on that in the sequel.

Q: Talking about your 'learning curve', what you have now is a game three or four months off completion. Has it turned out to be more ambitious than you thought?

A: Well, actually the script itself exceeded what we could put on the machine, which is a good thing, we had to leave things on the drawing board and we'll pick those up in the sequel. As far as the execution goes, the developers have actually advanced expectations quite a bit. We asked for the moon and they have delivered, we're very pleased with the way the developers have worked on it.

Q: Let's talk about some of the weaponry used against you during the course of the game.

A: It pretty much ranges throughout what is modern military technology, most of it out of the manual. I hate to plug Janes', but we do have the Janes' license [EA have licensed the famous military publisher] and there was a certain amount of keeping up with what is the real hardware out there now – we wanted to to be sure of what current technical capabilities are. So there's nothing outlandish about that stuff, there's SCUD missiles, CRUISE missiles, anti-tank stuff, submarines, big guns [laughs]. Pretty much if it shoots we've got it in the game.

Q: And because it's Russia, are there nuclear weapons involved?

A: Ummm, yes. There is positive, but not overt, usage of nuclear weapons in the game.

Q: You sound a bit hesistant there. Is this some sort of a surprise?

A: [laughs] Yeah!

Q: The 'Strike games have a reputation for being really hard, real gamers' games. Have you set out to make Soviet Strike as difficult, or more broadly accessible?

A: I think you're exactly right. That's one of my concerns, that I've always found the games a little hard myself. One of the things we've thought about, which we might include as an easter egg [American term for cheat] or even as an option is a mode where you can just go round and shoot things up, but I'm not sure quite how we're going to handle that. We won't allow that to spoil playing the game for real.

Q: What you're talking about is Strike's interactive scenery, where in the other games you can blow buildings up, trash the scenery and find things hidden. Is that feature extended here?

A: We have that, and we also have other things that occur — I don't want to give too much away — inquisitive stuff, where you will have to interact with the scenery in order to complete some of the missions correctly. You'll need to be ordered in the way you blow things up so as not to trigger some other event, which may for example get in the way of someone trying to get through to you.

Q: This leads on to another question about the artificial intelligence within the game. When we saw the game at E3, we saw enemy soldiers emerge from a destroyed building and drive off in a jeep, which you could follow. How intelligent are the elements like soldiers you face in the game?

A: Well, it works at various levels as defined by the game designers. What you saw there was actually scripted. So basically what the script says is 'if this building gets shot by a gun, release this man, get into the car', it's a scripted thing. He has a path to follow, he drives down the road like a madman and then he crashes. And that is all scripted by the implementers. On the other side is the bad guy AI, this is stuff like how the tanks react, and these routines are a lot more complicated. These involve questions like 'does he turn and run away?' if you're really pummeling him, or does he come after you? They can be scared, the can stand and defend themself, and at that level, it's all in code, that's more random and more sophisticated than the pre-planned stuff.

Q: And is that AI significantly more complex than in the 16-bit version?

A: Oh yes, absolutely. We're taking advantage of all the extra cycles we have here. We're chucking in some stuff so that...well, tanks will surprise you a little bit.

Q: Does it not depress you that most people will miss all that, since it's invisible?

A: You're right.

Q: We saw a section of the game that involved you destroying a Chernobyl-style reactor, with people collapsing glowing green with radiation. Do you not worry some gameplay elements are a little close to the bone?

A: We have tried to be pretty sensible about most of the mayhem that goes on. We're always clear about why you're doing things like that for a greater good. The bad guys are obviously bad guys who are trying to work this reactor to do some worse damage, as it were. What we hope to do is capture the thing with a good story around it, like any good movie the bad guy is really bad, so when he gets it in the end, you don't necessarily feel too bad about it. But yeah, it's a very sensitive item that's foremost in our thoughts.

Q: You want a little bit of spice as well?

A: Pardon? Spice? Oh yeah, [laughs] spice as well!

►



GRAPHICS AND OTHER MATTERS...

Q: The graphics in the game look as if they could be groundbreaking. Could you talk us through some of the aspects, including the backgrounds you mentioned earlier?

A: What we're doing is a unique technology that allows you to, what we call, 'stream' the background off the CD during gameplay, so what you're seeing out there is not tiles or repetitive background graphics. We're actually pulling off new data as you fly around. So you're seeing a basically photo-realistic, non-repeated background that gives it a unique look, I think – not so chunky.

Q: You can do that on all versions?

A: That's on all versions.

Q: That sounds pretty revolutionary! Do you know of other games that use that technique?

A: Not now! Well I hope not. I think it has been used on a couple of games but they don't have a deep playfield and are pretty much contained.

Q: Does that mean you could make levels as big as you wanted?

A: Well, you are limited by CD size, but yeah. We have to try and keep in mind how big the world is so people don't get lost in it, so we keep it at a manageable size.

Q: What are the restrictions on the game running while this process is going on, does it slow it down?

A: No, actually it doesn't. Once we got onto the CD and started playing, we found it was quicker than the development machines we were working on [most develoment units use a non-CD storage system]. For myself it was crucial we delivered on the gameplay. We could have had pretty backgrounds, but we didn't have enough hardware memory left over to do the actual game. It was a critical point that we needed to have enough room for the buildings, the explosions, the helicopter. We needed to keep from spending too much time on the backgrounds and not enough on the gameplay, and I think we've struck a good balance.

Q: This sounds like an interesting technical development that could be used beyond Soviet Strike. Do you have plans to patent it?

A: We're looking at it for other formats, but primarily for the sequel, we certainly want to accomplish that. It could be used for other games, and we are interested in pushing the envelope and going on to bigger and better things.

Q: You touched on the two viewpoints in the game. Has there been any work on dramatic camera angles within the game?

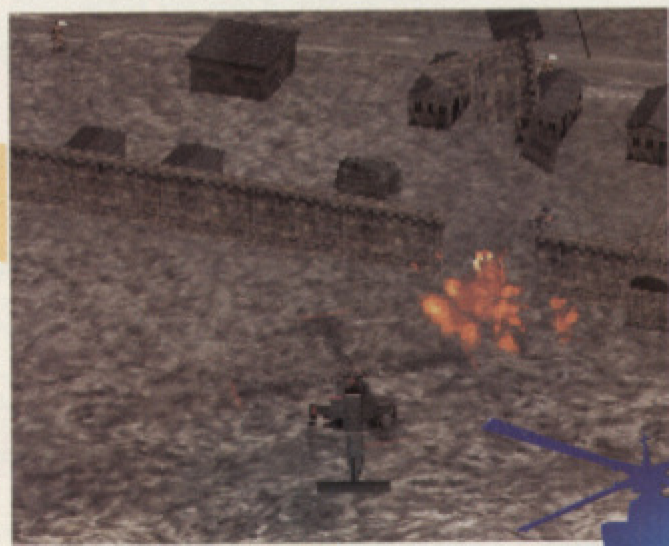
A: We do move the camera to follow the terrain, which kind of alters it a little bit, but part of the restriction due to the technology we're using is that we can't move the camera a heck of a lot, just because of how it works. It just one of those things that happens that we couldn't have a free-ranging camera. You'll never see the sky in 'Strike, unfortunately.

Q: Could you explain the nature of the viewpoints?

A: The first one is behind the chopper, and it's the one where the world turns and the chopper basi-



The stunning preliminary artwork for the Black Sea. We're not sure if this will make its way into the finished game. But why not?





The Apache approaches an encampment guarded by AA batteries. These will display more intelligence than the seasoned strike player is used to.

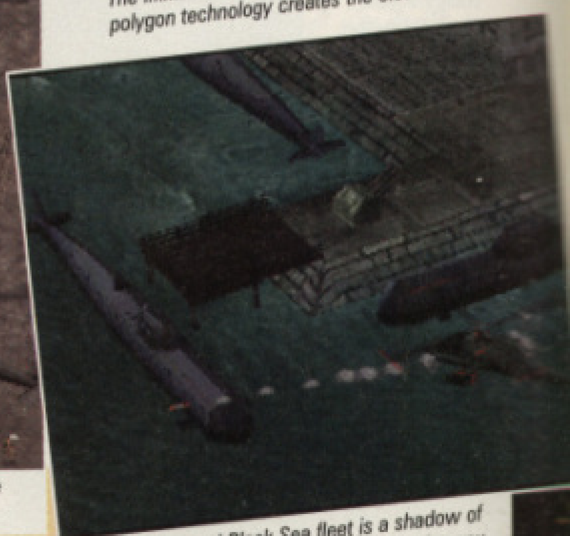




Details right down to transparent missile trails separate this from the genre of mere blasters. It's art, mate.



The immaculate rendering of the mountains. A special polygon technology creates the elevations in-game.



The once proud Black Sea fleet is a shadow of its former strength, but still enough to give you a run for your money.







Creating the complex maps was a three stage process involving aerial photography of real geography for inspiration, computer rendering using a little imagination, then tactical mapping by the designers to include the imaginary furniture of war.

cally stays in front of you. The other is where north is always north on the map and the chopper moves, so that's more like the old game.

Q: How smoothly is the game running?

A: That number changes daily, but it only gets better! Currently we're running a minimum of twenty, we hope to get better than that.

Q: So you're maybe thinking of making 25, 30 frames a second?

A: That's a great goal, I certainly hope we get there. And I think once the game's together we're going to optimise it up.

Q: Are polygons being used to create objects within the game?

A: Absolutely, everything in the game, every object, every shape is polygon.

Q: Including the backgrounds?

A: They use a variety of polygon shapes. When you get into the game you'll see we have hills, valleys; a variety of elevations and those are all polygons.

Q: The Saturn has some hardware facilities for backgrounds. Did the convertors use these to do things slightly differently?

A: Well, the PSX has certain custom effects not on the Saturn, so the guys at Tiberon have had a slightly more difficult road to hose, so to speak. If you mean visual differences, hopefully not. With the current builds we have they are pretty much up with one another.

Q: Explosions is one area where some of our fanatical readers get worked up. Will you be able to create the transparency effects to the same quality as the PSX?

A: Yeah, that's one area we noticed, as the Playstation has more levels of transparency. We're going to try our best, and from what I see there's not a huge qualitative difference.

Q: Still on graphics, there are some really nice buildings in the game. How many different types exist and where did you get inspiration for them? Did someone travel around eastern europe?

A: For the buildings specifically we have a lot of library books, references from magazines and National Geographic. Specifically for the Kremlin and some of the other major buildings we had someone in Moscow to get reference pictures. We did the video shoot in the Czech Republic and one of our designers went there with his camera and took pictures of every type of building. So there's an extensive amount of research done.

Q: The project has been going two years, and in that time Sega has come up with new libraries and tools. Have you used these to alter the game as you go?

A: As far as libraries are concerned I don't know of any new ones, perhaps additions, as external sources go. I think most of the credit goes to our internal team who have created the game's scripting language themselves.

Q: What of music and sound effects to accompany the graphics. The 'Strike series is renowned for its FX and with CD sound available what are you putting together?

A: That covers an area of another new technology we've developed here at San Mateo. We call it Interactive Music System. It allows us to dynamically change the music depending on the situation you're in, so if you're say resting in the game, the music can be low key and when you're in the heat of things the music can be up there and very 'in your face'. We went into this thinking 'this may not work', but we were proved wrong and it actually works quite well.

Q: It sounds a bit like the system Bullfrog devised for Magic Carpet, but they had a problem covering the gap needed in locating new music on the CD.

A: Well, as the backgrounds are being loaded from CD, all of this stuff has to be held in memory.

Q: So you're using the sound chip?

A: Yeah, we're using every trick in the book.

Q: What do you think about the Saturn itself as a piece of hardware, after Soviet Strike has been a bit of a test of it?

A: I think you're right in describing it as a test. The Saturn is looked upon as a sort of a weak sister by some developers, but we didn't take that view. We just didn't have the resources to do it in-house, so we got one of the top houses over here, Tiberon in Florida. Having the Saturn do it's thing and not make any compromises was foremost in our minds.

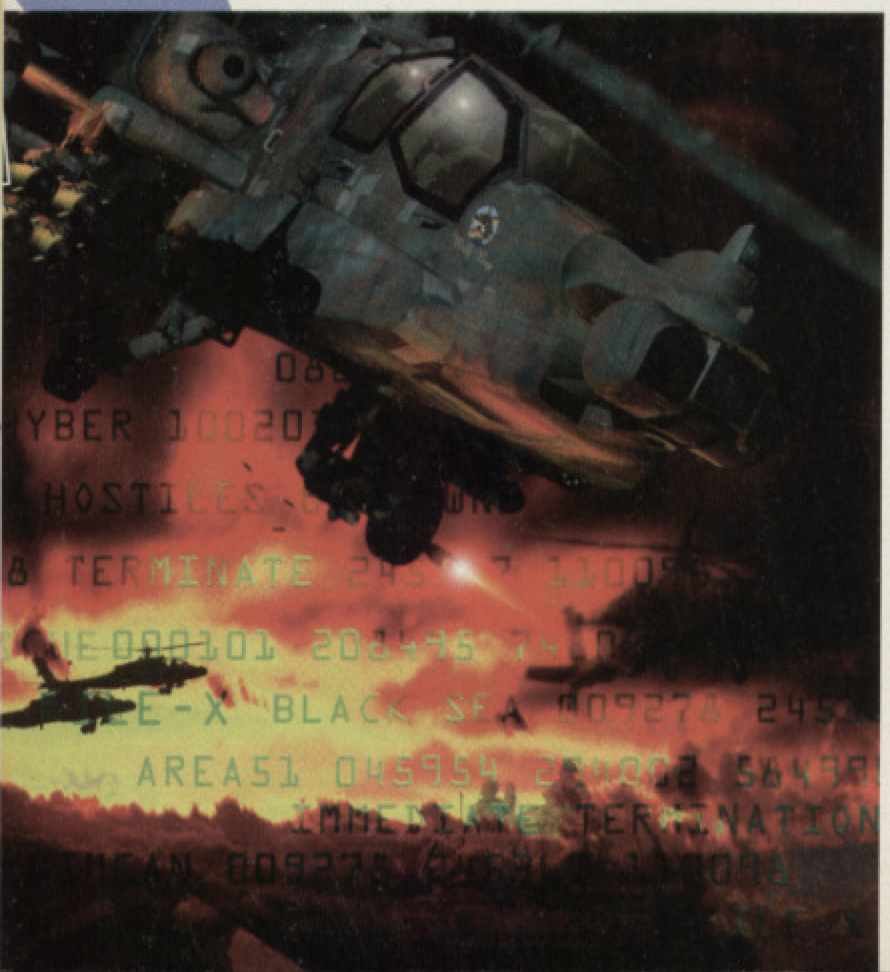


Michael Kosaka seen her plotting your destruction in Soviet Strike. 'It's the gameplay that makes me do this' he replies in answer to the concept of Interactive movies.



Scenes depicting the ultimate confrontation in a Moscow. Will you be able to save a vodka-swilling Yeltsin.





Q: Personally speaking, what games do you admire on Saturn?

A: I like just about every new game that comes out, and people are doing some remarkable things on the machine. For myself, Panzer Dragoon 2 is just mindblowing, and Virtua Fighter 2, of course.

Q: Do you think 'Strike will be big name amongst 32-bit owners from its past success?

A: I hope those who had a good time on the 16-bit will get 'Strike, and those who are new to it will come and see what we're doing. I'd like to think there's still an audience out there for it. We've got more depth in it than other games, the object not being to kill everything on screen, but to play it smart. We're talking about a slightly more mature audience and we think our video, our music, will engage them.

Q: Where does the 'Strike series go after Soviet Strike? Now you've had Superpower confrontation, what then — helicopters in space?

A: I'll take that idea! We've started already, and although we haven't settled on any idea, we want to push the technology. We want to do more and better of what we have, that's all I can say.

Q: Will it use the same engine? EA sometimes have a reputation for 'recycling' technology!

A: I worked on John Madden '94, so I know of what you say! I'm sensitive to that, so I don't just want to pump out another one of these, and in the long run it doesn't serve the game. It's critical that we make it more robust and worth every dollar you pay for it.

Q: Thanks very much.

ALIEN TRILOGY

BY: ACCLAIM

RELEASE: AUGUST

PRICE: TBA

GAME TYPE: DOOM

1 PLAYERS

BREAK DOWN

ORIGINALITY

CHALLENGE

ACTION

STRATEGY

REFLEXES

OPTIONS

CONTROL: JOYPAD

GAME DIFFICULTY: PRETTY TOUGH

CONTINUES: SAVE GAME

SKILL LEVELS: 3

RESPONSIVENESS: GOOD

ORIGIN

Originally intended for release on the Mega-CD, Alien Trilogy was shelved until home technology caught up with it.

GAME AIM

Destroy the three alien queens, kill everything else, find some Id tags, don't get horribly annihilated.

BEAT THIS

KILL FIRST TWO ALIEN QUEENS





Even the most vicious alien beings have childhoods. That care-free period at the start of their lives spent playing and exploring the world. And eating each other. Indeed, scientists working around the clock to decipher the screeching language of the particular xenomorphs in this game have succeeded in translating the blood-curdling guttural retch given out by the cute little chestburster in the first alien movie. It is in fact a nursery rhyme, and runs as follows...

"I'm a little alien short and stout,
Here's my mandibles, here's my snout.
A product of Geiger's phallic ima-ger-ee,
I'll rip your neck out with my teeth so don't fool with meee."

Quite how this sort of knowledge is passed from alien to alien is beyond me, given that they hatch from eggs and spend their gestation period munching on people's insides, coming into absolutely no contact with other members of their species at all. In fact, maybe this explains their anti-social attitudes of eating everything – every alien has absentee parents. Anyway, the point of this is for you, the human player, to appreciate the true horror of this embittered genocidal war. Alien and human determined to wipe out the other genus entirely. And for what? For fun. Please think about your dastardly behaviour next time you gun down an innocent chestburster or facehugger with your plasma grenades, and remember it could easily be one of your children. If you have really ugly children. That look like willies.











LIGHTS, CAMERA, AARGH

The good thing about the Alien trilogy itself (apart from the last film, which had no good things) is that it was dead dead scary, had really low-level lighting and buckets of death. Well the Alien Trilogy game retains this quality. Lighting is used to all-important effect. Most corridors are pretty gloomy, but some are made worse with subtle red lighting (which means every shadow could be an alien – or a wall) or worst of all, no rays in the extreme. Some levels contain light switches which activate the sockets in other areas of the stage, which is one way to lose the ambience and create more shooting visibility. The other is to pick up one of the body-mounted torches. However, these don't last long before the battery runs out, so be sure not to trap yourself in a pitch black room with a squad of evil enemies.



Take that, you freakin' melon farmer!

EN
O G Y







EXCLUSIVE!
1ST REVIEW

SKIN 'EM ALIVE!

Earlier we mentioned the buckets of death inherent in the Alien movies. Well what we forgot to say was that there's buckets of death in the game too. Often your own. Every variety of alien creature has made it over to the Saturn, from Facehugger to dog alien and everything in between. There are even stacks of weirdo human Corporation Soldiers out to kill you. Lord knows why, it's not like they could have teamed up with the aliens or anything. Still, ours not to reason why, ours but to make aliens die. Facehuggers are the easiest things to kill, then humans, but every fully-hatched alien is a total pig. Probably the hardest things to destroy are the Chestbursters, which are tiny, fast-moving and shockingly resilient. They're not as dangerous in damage terms, however, as a dog or human-style alien. Know your enemy, and know also that it must be laid to rest.





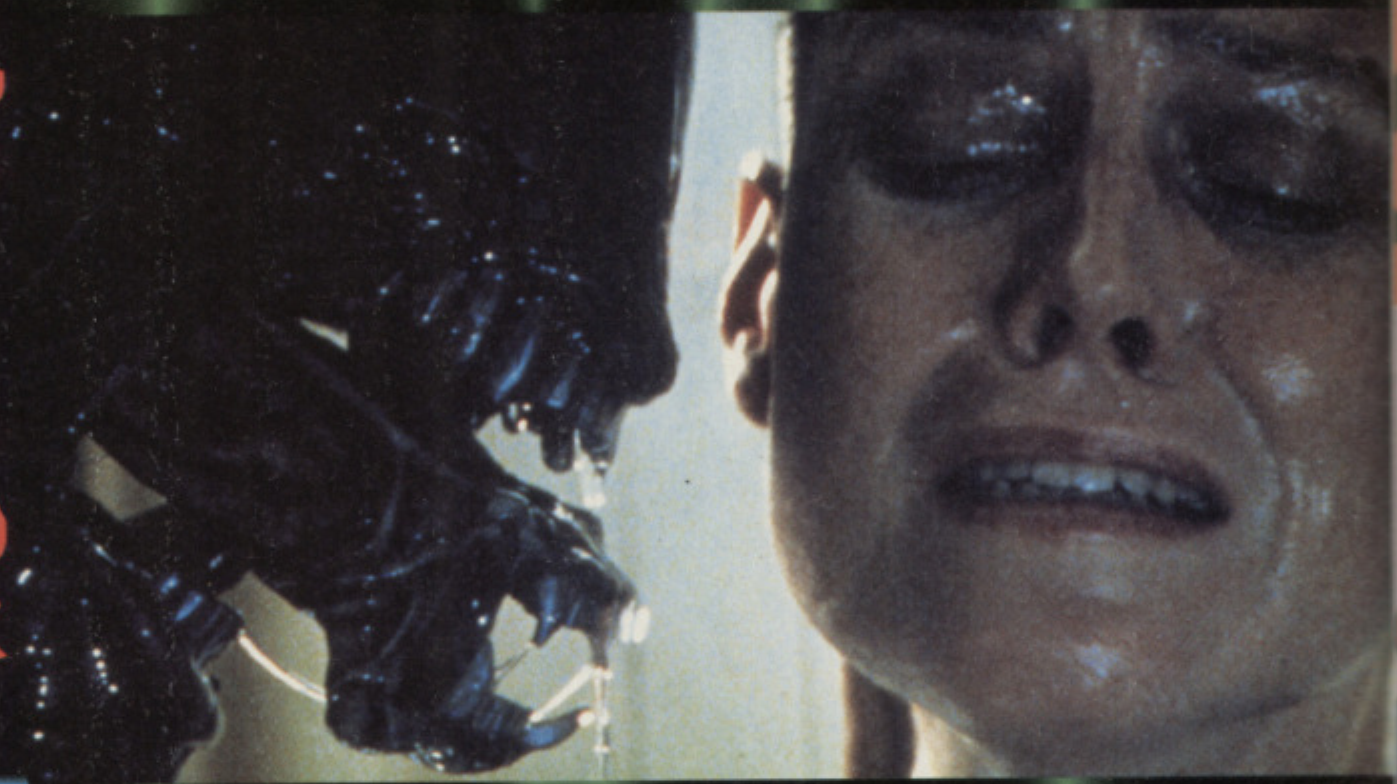
Different aliens, differ- ent targets, different speeds, different dam- age. Same bloodbath



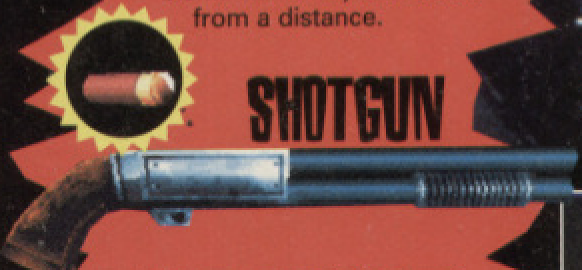
MY NEW GUN

We all know why people get into video games. It's for the guns. All the best games have big guns in them, and there's no reason Alien Trilogy should be any different. Although you start the game with a pretty rubbish pistol there are hordes of better weapons scattered around the various levels. The further you get into the game the better they get (and the worse the threats you face). For example, the first stage yields a shotgun, followed on the next by a flamethrower, and so on up to the awe-inspiring Smart Gun via the double-action Pulse Rifle machine gun with built-in rocket launcher. Ammunition for all your guns is limited, so search out as much of it on each level as you can. And remember that re-loading your gun after each clip is spent delays your next shot. This can easily be fatal when you're facing a huge beastie creature at point-blank. Run away and shoot from a distance.





SHOTGUN



FLAME THROWER



HAND GUN



SMARTGUN



PULSE RIFLE





Those small orb things are actually alien eggs. Facehuggers leap out from them.



That guard is obviously having to keep his hands warm with a furry muffler thing.



Ha ha! Survey the carnage! Go on, shoot that other bloke! Kill! Ha ha ha ha!



I do not expect you to talk Mr Bond... I EXPECT YOU TO DIE!!



MAPS O'DEATH

Whilst developers Probe have taken every care to prevent the levels from looking too samey (ie – the corridors aren't all built out of the same character blocks), it's still possible to lose your way through the labyrinthian levels. In fact, it's pee easy because you can hardly see where you're going in panicked flight sometimes. Luckily for you Ripley (your character) has a really good memory which allows her to recall the layout of each corridor and room she has passed through. Simply pause the game and the map screen pops up, showing – amazingly – a map. Which glows in the dark, which is a pretty impressive feat for a human mind. If you're nosy and you want to know where everywhere is immediately, be on the lookout for the Automapper computer concealed in each stage. Once you've got this the whole cartographical wonder is unveiled.



Shooting explosive... destructive chain...

SALE OF THE CENTURY

It's sad to see that even the future humans are operating in an acquisitional materialistic society, where the profligation of new consumer goods is worshipped above all things. Although, on the other hand, it's not that bad. Thanks to her Western instincts, Ripley is keen to grab all the goodies laid out in front of her in this Supermarket Sweep of interplanetary war. Without these aids it's likely her lifespan would be considerably shorter. Some of the items have immediately obvious practicality, like acid vests which protect the player from the venomous blood of dead aliens, or medikits which replenish lost energy. Others, such as the night vision goggles, don't come into play until later on in the stage. Still others, like the ID cards, actually serve no useful in-game purpose, but are required as a level-completing stipulation.

















This sequence shows off the rather gory Game Over sequence. It's icky.



...arrels with the shotgun produces a hugely ...ction, blasting everything in the vicinity.



Despite the best efforts of the Mean Machines Militia, Gus was still able to escape the building and hunt for more Erasure CDs.



LOADSADEVELOPMENTMONEY!

You could never accuse Alien Trilogy of having low production values. Well you could, but it wouldn't be able to hear you because it's just a game. And you'd be wrong as well. In both graphics and sound arenas Alien Trilogy wears its money on its sleeve. The movement of all the enemies is the product of much work in Probe's US motion capture studio, and it shows, especially in the scary alien scuttling. As for the audio – over 60% of the effects are nabbed from the movies themselves. Your ears may not thank you for this, because it's all a bit horrible. To top it off Alien Trilogy has one of the eeriest and most understated soundtracks you'll ever hear. Well done those lads.



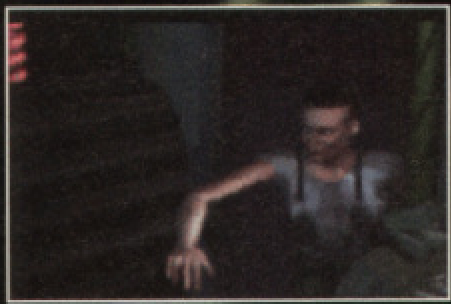
You won't be able to hear the excellent sound effects from these shots...



...but they sound like this "Skeeeerk skrouk reeeeee" and "thlblouchs". Dead good.



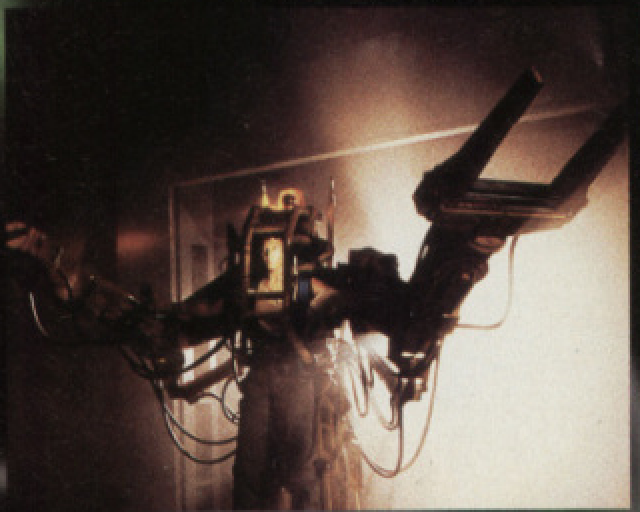


















Shoot the swimming face huggers and distort the water.

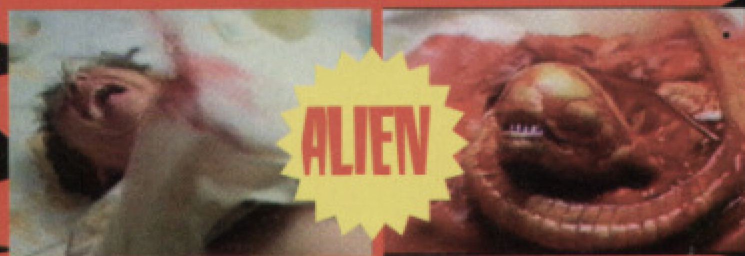


In space, no-one can hear you playing the trumpet.



ALIEN - THE FILM TRILOGY

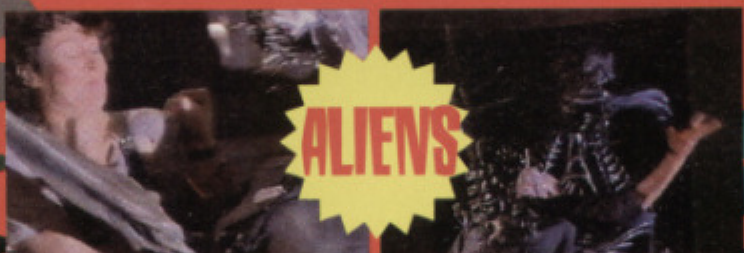
"In space...no-one can hear you scream." The immortal poster message that launched Ridley Scott's Alien into the realm of cinematic legend. The 1979 classic starred John Hurt, Yaphet Kotto and Ian Holm, but only the lower billed Sigourney Weaver would survive further encounters with the hideous creatures inspired by the disturbing work of Swiss artist HR Geiger. Aliens, directed by James 'The Terminator' Cameron, swapped much of the horror/suspense of the original film for a series of spectacular pitched battles between the marines and the mutants. Both films have their fans, but there's little disputing the disappointment of Alien 3. Despite a promising premise (Weaver is stranded on a penal colony that has been infiltrated by aliens) director David Fincher failed to make the final (?) confrontation memorable.



Kane (John Hurt) suffers indigestion after a protracted attack from a face-hugger.

The lethal alien emerges from the remnants of the host corpse. The fight is on...

The spectacular creatures in Aliens earned the film a deserved Oscar for special effects. Sigourney Weaver was nominated for Best Actress.



Ripley defends a last-minute attack from the seemingly unstoppable alien Queen.

For the android Bishop it is already too late – his body is torn apart.

Reports of Alien 4 – Resurrection are now more than just rumours. The involvement of French director Jean-Pierre Jeunet promises something very bizarre indeed...



The corrut Company try to convince Ripley that the alien foetus can be removed from her chest.

But they never could be trusted. Ripley sacrifices herself to prevent the spread of the alien spawn. The end...or is it?











I certainly wouldn't like to be in her shoes. Poor thing.



Oh my God! It's the invasion of the Blancmanche People!



COMMENT



RAD

Whilst Alien Trilogy has been in development for some considerable time (almost two years) the timing of its release puts it against the forthcoming Exhumed. However, these two games are very different. The most important element of Alien Trilogy is its atmosphere. The sound deserves some responsibility for this, along with the excellent graphics, conspiring to produce an element of tension which totally craps you up. You never know what's around the next corner (although it's usually something horrible), and as much time goes into not dying as killing. Fans of the movies, and anyone interested in a bit of destroying, will be in clover here. My only real criticism is that the game can get a bit samey after a couple of hours at the console, but then you can save your position and go back when you're ready to play again. Alien Trilogy might not do anything especially new, but it does its job brilliantly.

COMMENT



GUS

Neither Probe nor the Saturn have let you down. This is a stupendous conversion of a superlative title. Few film licenses ever accurately portray the movie they are supposed to be based on, but Alien Trilogy captures every inch of the territory covered by the three films, and the gameplay benefits from cannily milking the atmosphere of terror. Something akin to the feelings of Ripley in the films stalk the player as he inches his way through the darkness. There is quiet suspense, claustrophobia, the unsettling bleep of the motion tracker and, sure enough, the shock as a man-sized monster who refused to lie down and die comes from a door you thought led to an exit. The technical brilliance of the 3D, the music (better than Playstation) and the fast pace almost sink into the background, but that's just testament to how engrossing the gameplay is. In every way a classic.

GRAPHICS — 92

▲ Awesome sprites and backgrounds which capture the atmosphere of the flicks perfectly.
▼ Sometimes a bit on the dark side.

ANIMATION — 91

▲ Motion capture ensures sharp movement and realism all over the shop.
▼ Sprites mean the aliens sometimes look flat when turning.

MUSIC — 92

▲ Quiet and ominous, sometimes silent soundtracks which enhance the feel of the game no end.
▼ Occasionally there are little funky keyboard workouts which don't fit.

EFFECTS — 92

▲ Mostly sampled from the film, they're eerie and scary and realistic.
▼ Much of the game is very quiet, although this is obviously intentional.

PLAYABILITY — 93

▲ It's very easy to get really involved in the unfolding horror, and the simple controls and ultra-violence make it great fun to play.
▼ Not an awful lot to it.

LASTABILITY — 89

▲ Loads and loads of missions, which get very hard indeed. You'll want to play it to the end.
▼ Once completed the replay value is limited.

OVERALL

One of the best film licenses ever produced, and a spot on translation of a movie phenomenon. Great stuff and well worth a look.

91

PROJECT
TANK

PUBLISHER
BMG

INITIATED
AUGUST '95

RELEASE
JANUARY '97

FORMAT
SATURN

DEVELOPERS
NMS

TA

In this climate of sophisticated and epic games which require a lifetime to complete and a manual the size of the Yellow Pages to play, it's refreshing to be reacquainted with an old MEAN MACHINES favourite – complete and utter destruction.

And there's bucketloads of that in Tank, a 'Return Fire without the brains'-type military game from BMG. You're in command of a, you guessed it, tank. Across 24 missions of simple strategy and varying scenarios, you employ a huge armoury against your instructed targets. And anything else that takes your fancy. Take out buildings, machinery, radar facilities and enemy tanks with cannons, machine guns, proximity mines, flame throwers (our favourite), smart bombs and guided missiles. Trundle across bridges, under rivers and even through the remains of buildings once you've blasted them away. The game has already been completed on PC – the Saturn version is next, taking priority over the Playstation version. These are the first pictures from the small amount of conversion work that has yet been completed. Although there are only a few levels present here, and not much in the way of opposition, we hope it vividly recreates the special thrill that only wanton destruction and mindless carnage can bring. It's not for nothing that this is being called Mass Destruction in the States...





You'll soon come across this windfarm. Such electricity-generating windmills are, of course, a countryside eyesore. Eradicate them.



SPROLYGON POLYGONS

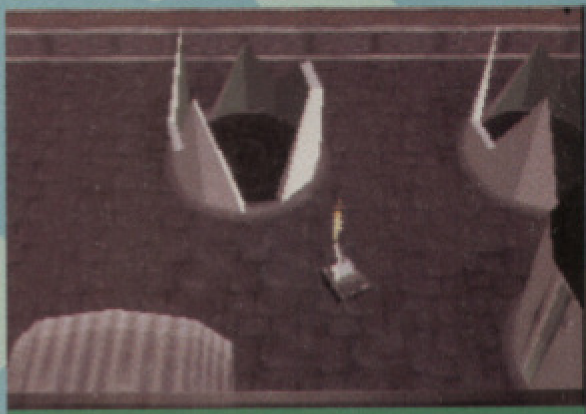
One of the first things that strikes you about Tank is its ultra-smooth appearance. This is down to developers NMS using a new system they call 'Sprolygon technology'. However ridiculous the name may sound, the result is a fairly seamless integration of 2D and 3D objects on screen which produces a real sense of depth and clarity. We approve.



Going through the gate is actually much easier.



One of the few rivals programmed into the game at this stage.



The refinery's storage vats go up a treat.







HOLY SMOKE

There are more than just the standard brown and grey buildings to demolish in Tank. From skyscrapers to sheds, nothing is safe. Nothing is sacred either – the local church can be blitzed and then driven through (while you torch the inside) and the village clocktower, a beautiful piece of architecture in itself, goes down a treat with a couple of shells shoved up it. Lovely. You'll never know the right time again.



Turn your destructive power on the town centre. This is the church. Erm, this was the church.



Dutifully observing a red traffic light, you decide to kill some time.



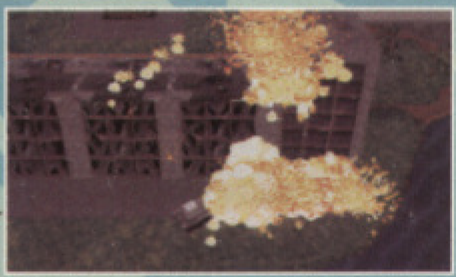
Once you've set your watch you can go ahead and spoil everyone else's fun.



Admiring your handiwork, you patiently wait for the lights to change.

The cutesy games backlash starts here. Marcus straps on his goggles, flips his turret lid and asks, 'Who's for Loaded in a tank?'

ANK







Cross the damaged bridge and pile through the gates of this fortress wall – before bombarding what's inside with some carefully aimed charges.

MINE'S A PINT

Particularly troublesome targets call for something extra – land mines. These dockyard cranes only go down after you deposited enough of the explosive little critters beneath them. You seem to have an unlimited supply which you can eject from the back of your vehicle. A word of advice, however – these things don't come with much of a fuse...



Drop mines from the back of your vehicle and marvel at the blossoming explosions.



A three point turn puts you in the right position to mine the supporting legs of these cranes...

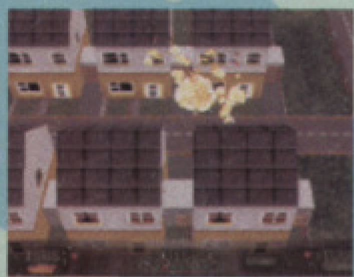


...keep plugging away, detonating charges at the base of the crane...



...until the whole lot goes up.







SMOKE ON THE WATER



One nice touch is the way your tank and its weaponry reflect off the water in the river. Makes using the flamethrower a real pleasure.





There are four different types of terrain in Tank, all of which you can trundle across and ruin in the 24 missions available. We were impressed by the rivers – positioning our tanks on bridges and firing flamethowers over the water the reflections were clearly visible. Nice one. If you can't be bothered with bridges (or have already blown them up) then take your vehicle for a little swim. When we tried it we always emerged unscathed on the other side, if a bit rusty.



These three pictures are from the PC version of the game...



...and give a taste of some of the future levels that we can expect to see...



...converted for the Saturn version.

PROJECT	ACTUA GOLF
PUBLISHER	GREMLIN
INITIATED	APRIL '96
RELEASE	SEPTEMBER '96
FORMAT	SATURN
DEVELOPERS	GREMLIN

Gremlin are setting out to create nothing less than the greatest computer golf game of all time. Can it actua-lly be true?



Golf has been the poor relation in the next generation sports dash. Soccer, basketball, American football – all with their lovely 3-D worlds and commentaries. There have been golf games, but each has had a glaring deificiency, plus no-one has tried to do anything particularly daring in the presentation.

Gremlin are attempting to rectify this with their forthcoming Actua Golf. The Saturn development has been underway for only a few months, because this is an exact conversion of Gremlin's Playstation Actua Golf. The PSX version is not actually out, and it turns out that its lead over the Saturn version will only be a few weeks.

Actua Golf is benefiting from the work done on the previous Actua title, Actua Soccer, as the principles of its 3-D world are the same. It also uses Gremlin's in-house motion capture facility for the most realistic golfer animation ever. The game's two stunning aspects are its flexibility and lush graphic presentation.

ACTUA WORLD

Actua Golf is the second step in Gremlin's emerging Sports range (third if you count Euro '96 on Saturn as distinct from Actua Soccer). The third title, at design stage, is Actua Tennis. Look out for details on that later this year.



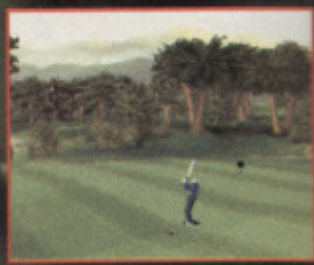
OVER HILL AND DOWN DALE

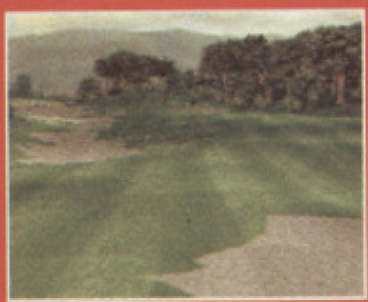
Other golf games (like Valora Valley and Virtua Golf) have used rendered 3-D environments – none can match the detail, scope and smoothness of Actua Golf. Start the game and a default view of the golfer's rear (!) is offered, but that's just for convenience. Various tools let you change the perspective to view the course from virtually any point. And you can play the shot from there too, if you want.

The course graphics are gorgeous for a game of this type, and layers of parallax detail blends the 3-D foreground onto a 'painted' bitmap background.













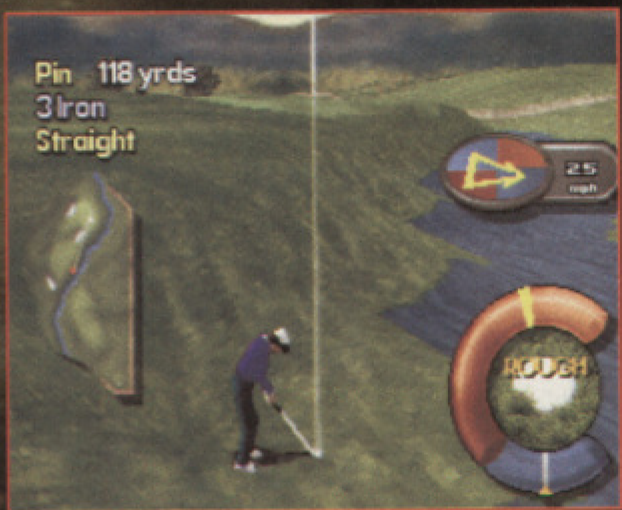
If you go down to the woods today, you'll see a small man bending over a large yellow ribbon.

LENS FLAIR

A golf game with exciting replays? This unlikely scenario has occured in Actua through ingenious and comprehensive camera programming. There are umpteen ways of viewing a shot — panning, tracking, reverse movement or even 'into cam' modes, where the ball zooms into the lens and beyond. Gremlin are even toying with the idea of allowing a golf ball manufacturer pay to have their name on the ball, which would be readable in extreme close-up. The replays are even more astonishing, with the addition of split and multi replay screens. Split replays show two separate windows, viewing both point of shot and point of landing; multis divide the screen into three, all windows animated in real time, with no loss of detail.



Actua Golf's impersonation of a picture in picture display. Top tip: play Actua Golf on your crappy set and fool everyone into thinking you have a smart TV.





ctua GOLF











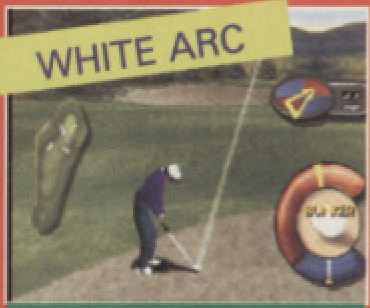




RAINBOW ARC

Gremlin have come up with their aiming arc as the central method of control. The arc points out the ball trajectory, but is more flexible than the one found in EA's PGA Tour series. Different colours offer flight-path information. With the joypad, the player can manipulate the arc to lower the angle of takeoff, and add 'draw' and 'fade', which curve the ball in flight. The whole construction of the arc device was intended to make control quick and simple without resorting to other menus.

WHITE ARC



ON TARGET

YELLOW ARC



OFF TARGET

ORANGE ARC



POSSIBLY IN LINE OF OBSTRUCTION

RED ARC



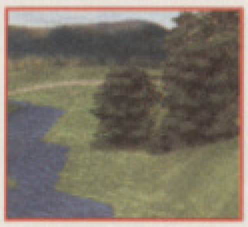
DEFINITELY IN LINE OF OBSTRUCTION

TO A TEE....

Actua has a huge front end, allowing you to fool around with your golfers, change their pringles etc. There are two courses on the disk, and holes can be played in any practice sequence or through as one of various matches.

RIVER VALLEY COURSE

An American-style course, that means a ridiculous amount of bunkers (or 'sand traps' as those tossers like to call them). Lots of water kicking about, and exotic foliage. Probably black widow spiders.





ROYAL GLEN CHAMPION COURSE

Add '-eagles' and you're looking at a writ. Royal Glen is the epitome of a Scottish country course (not like St. Andrews, which is a seaside links). The scenery is terrific, the greens kept immaculately and the layouts altogether more refined.





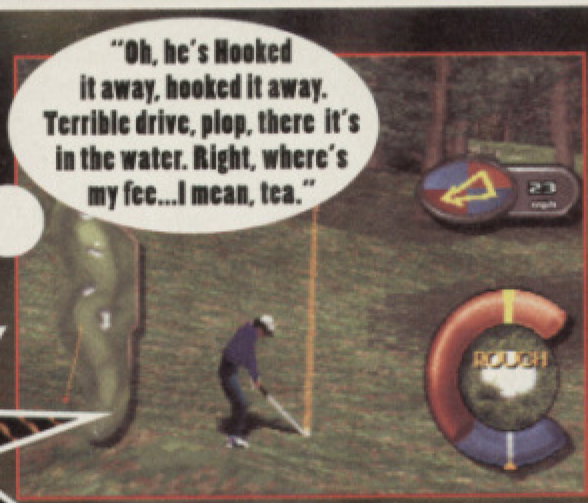


"You're watching A Round with Partridge, that's a round of golf with me, Alan Partridge. The name of the game is golf, and the look is sports casual."

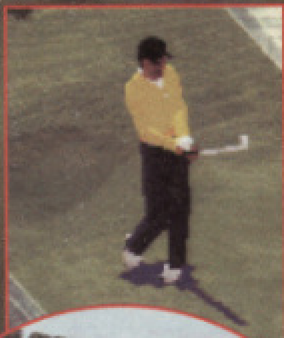
A ROUND WITH ALISS



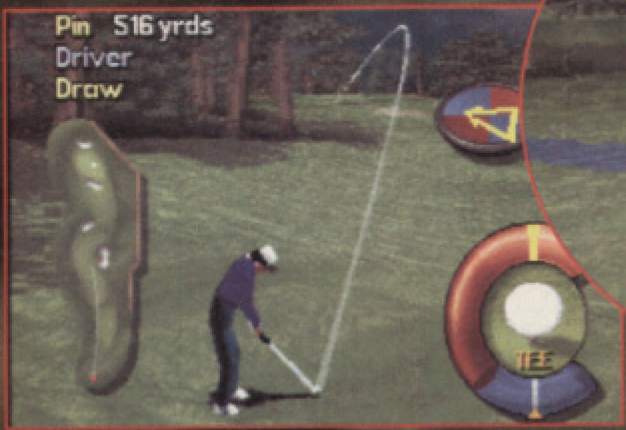
One of the most impressive aspects of Actua Golf is the commentary. The voice of golf himself, Peter Aliss, specially recorded hours of encouragement, derision and advice which blend together into one of the most atmospheric sound backdrops we've heard. Anyone doubting Aliss's credentials should examine the man's trophy case – 8 times Ryder Cup player, twice captain of the PGA as well as victories at the Spanish, Italian and Portugese Opens count among the highlights of his career. Be prepared for some harsh words if your performance doesn't meet with the golfmeister's exacting standards.













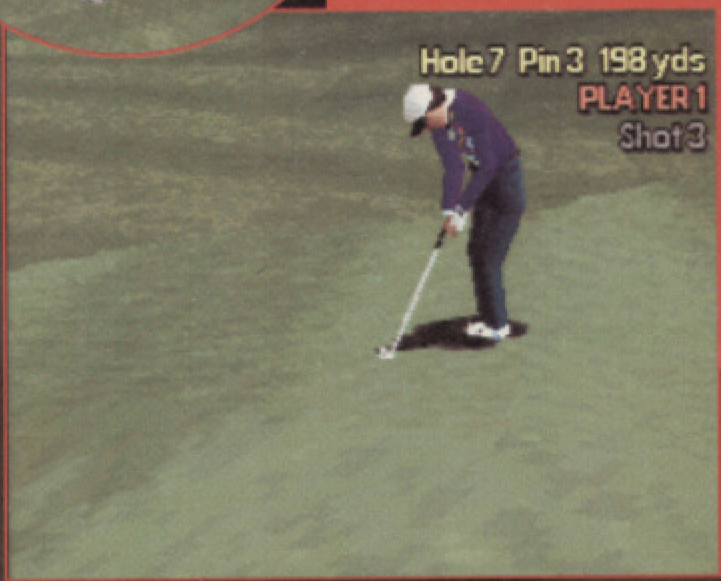
EAT MY GREENS

When you're up near the hole, the player is viewed close in, and a green grid can be brought up to give a clearer idea of the lie. There are amusing animations as the player tries to will the ball into the hole, and even the touch of having him retrieve the ball after sinking a putt, and taking the acclaim of the crowd (who must all be hiding in the bushes).





Millions of golfers die each year by taking a slash during a thunderstorm. You have been warned.







SUPER FLYBY

Before a hole is played, the game offers a flyby, with a commentary pointing out the various features. This is generated realtime, and not pre-rendered. The walk-the-hole feature is much the same as the fly by, but the player has freedom to roam around.




THE BLACKHEADS
OUT NOW ON TAPE.
REMOVES BLACKHEADS QUICKLY AND GENTLY
UNBLOCKS PORES
OXY
BLACKOUT
IF YOU'RE SERIOUSLY INTO BLACKHEADS, AND YOU'D RATHER NOT BE, CHECK OUT NEW OXY BLACKOUT. IT HAS SPECIAL STICKY TAPES THAT LIFT OUT BLACKHEADS GENTLY. BLACKHEADS? OXYCUTE 'EM!
OXY AND OXYCUTE 'EM! ARE TRADE MARKS.

PREVIEWS



BY: JVC

GAME TYPE: PINBALL

1-2 PLAYERS

PRICE: TBA

RELEASE: SEPTEMBER

COMPLETE

Pinball seems to hold no demons for programmers around the world, as JVC unveil the 337th pinball game for the Saturn. Since last year's distinctly underwhelming Digital Pinball (which cunningly looked good, before turning out to be crud) many have stepped up to the plinth of pub corners with their slanted table simulations.



The most recent, Pro Pinball, took a hearty stab at the genre, but the fundamental problem of getting a 3-D experience over on a flat screen remains. Until now, perhaps, as JVC pass the first Virtua Pinball sim into our hands. Most pinball games make a play on how 'realistic' they are, but JVC's Pinball Graffiti is the first to actually render the table in 3-D polygons, allowing you to zoom into the layout from any angle, and even play the game from a realtime ball perspective. Of course, the real test is in the gameplay, but with our techno-boffin natures duly aroused, we looked into the approaching phenomenon that is Pinball Graffiti.















LOSING YOUR BEARINGS

You can play the tables from a conventional fixed position in front of the raked table, known here as 'standard'. But pause the game and things become more interesting. You can manipulate the entire table, rotate and zoom in and out in 3-D dimensions. That will let you examine all the table elements, including the nifty transparency effects on the ramps, but usually your views will be useless for playing. However, there is an 'active' camera mode which zooms in on the action at key moments — ramps, lanes etc. and shows a close-up. This is all realtime stuff — not FMV renders!



WHAT'S THE STORY?

The Japanese version of Pinball Graffiti has an additional 'Story Mode' which is similar to those which accompany pool game like Side Pocket, only this is more bizarre. You spend time buying air tickets, getting mugged, then thrown in jail and playing a crap game of basketball. JVC Europe plan to remove it for the PAL version, but it's no great loss.



Off for a walk around Los Angeles.Watch out for muggers!



What the hell is going on? This is meant to be pinball!



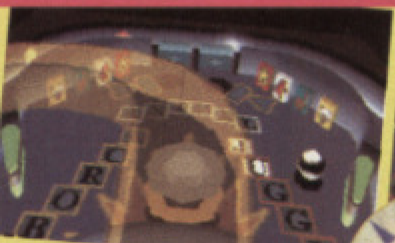
Why can't I sit in the front and play with the glove



So you think you can beat me at Circus Fantasia? Up yours, mate!





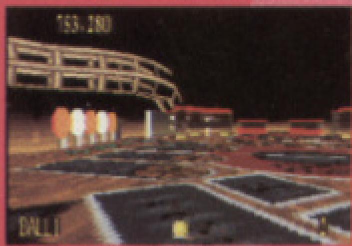






PLAY BALL

The most bonkers option is to view play from the ball's perspective. The version we saw only offered this mode for the first table, and it was quite slow, but JVC aim to offer it for all tables at an optimised speed by release time!



Only the basketball legends table features this at present.



From the ramp you can saw the draw-bridge feature close-up for yourself.



Yoiks! The flippers, but this viewpoint is actually just about playable.



A view of the launch channel you will have never seen before.

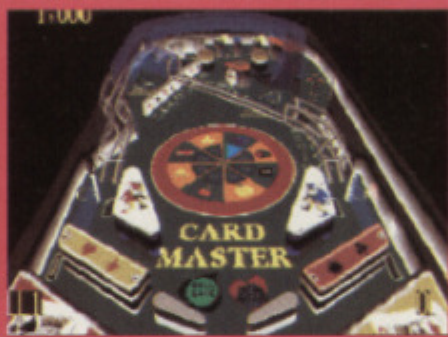


YOUR THREE TABLES

Three varied tables to choose from, and you can customise elements like number of balls and the gap between the flippers from the options menu.









BASKETBALL LEGEND

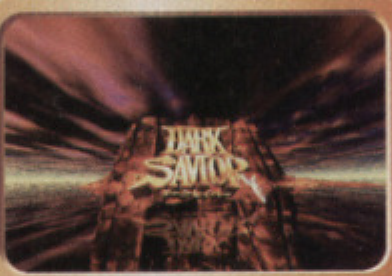
Unsurprisingly, all kinds of slam-dunk paraphenalia is on show, with bonus 'free throw' and triple multi-balls. There's two massive ramps, but one of these is draw-bridged. There is a single mid-table flipper set for the right hand ramp.

CARD MASTER

The music turns ragtime, as this table celebrates the gambler's trade. The easiest bonus to locate is the fruit machine, but drop all the card targets and the table really opens up. Segments of a roulette wheel fill to denote the approaching jackpot.

CIRCUS FANTASIA

The music here is mad, including the finale of Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture! The table seems to have less elements, but wave after wave of multi-balls, arranged from the upper segment of the table which has its own set of flippers.



BY: SEGA

GAME TYPE: RPG

PRICE: TBA

RELEASE: NOVEMBER '96

1 PLAYERS

COMPLETE



We have a passion for Japanese RPGs here at the House of Mean Machines, well good ones at any rate, and they don't come any better than those of Climax. Under the charismatic direction of Kan Naito, the small team that comprises Climax have been assembling Dark Saviour for the last year, and their final fruits should ripen in August for a Japanese release.

We will have to wait a little longer, as the mammoth amount of text in the game will require several months of painstaking translation. Dark Saviour rests heavily on its story, which is much more sophisticated than the average role-playing plot. The hero, Ryu-Ya travels to an island of political intrigue with a despotic ruler and a ravenous monster on the loose (cut-scenes see it devouring various unfortunate sailors and townsfolk).

Dark Saviour possesses all the tactical elements of Climax's hit Shining Force, and the puzzle elements of Landstalker, but platform fans will be truly delighted with the first full-blooded isometric platformer for the machine. The size of the game is astonishing, we assume the Dark Saviour graphic artist team will never want to look at another texture again, such is the variety of the graphics. The unique viewing perspective also best displays the grandeur of the game's structure, which can be played with the player character as a tiny figure on a large landscape.

The fact that this is the third instalment on Dark Saviour's progress emphasises just how hot we think this is. Don't miss our forthcoming review of Sega's planned English version.







HOW GREAT THOU ART

Climax has a reputation for amazing character art, in their own style of manga, heavily influenced by European folklore. For Dark Saviour, a stupendous amount of artwork, for dozens of the game's characters, has been produced.





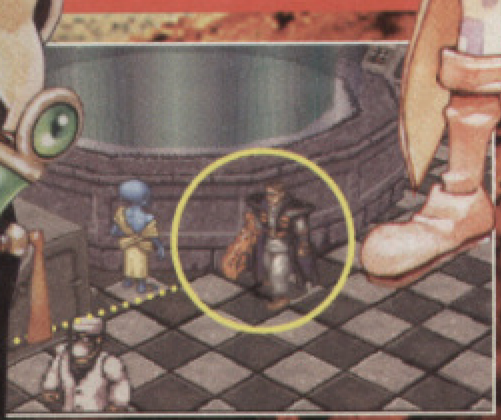


Climax must be consulting Ocean Software for this bit.





Ryu meets the welcoming part once the ship has docked. The town level represents chapter 2 in the game.





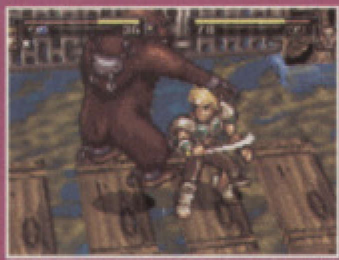
It's impossible to link these shots together in any other way, as the perspective alters in 3-D as you move. They do show the good old 'moving platforms stylee' gameplay that makes Dark Saviour so compulsive.





BATTLE STATIONS!

An innovative feature of Dark Saviour we reported previously is the battle mode entered when Ryu-Ya encounters a big foe. This has been tweaked so the two proponents face each other in a 2-D standoff — like Streetfighter. Ryu -Ya now has a range of attacking moves, slashes, runs, kicks and jumping attacks. The victor (assuming it's you) picks up all kinds of bonuses, bringing a points element into Climax games for the first time!

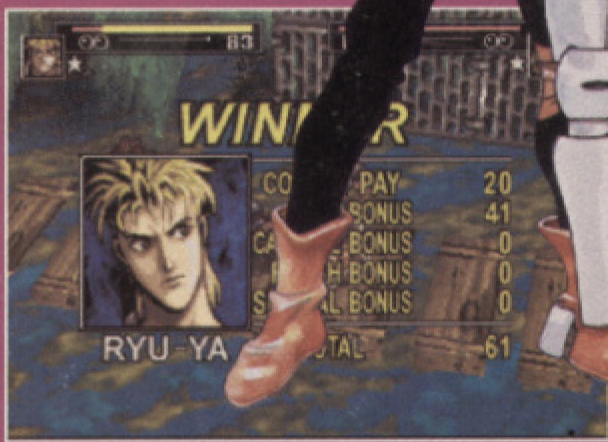


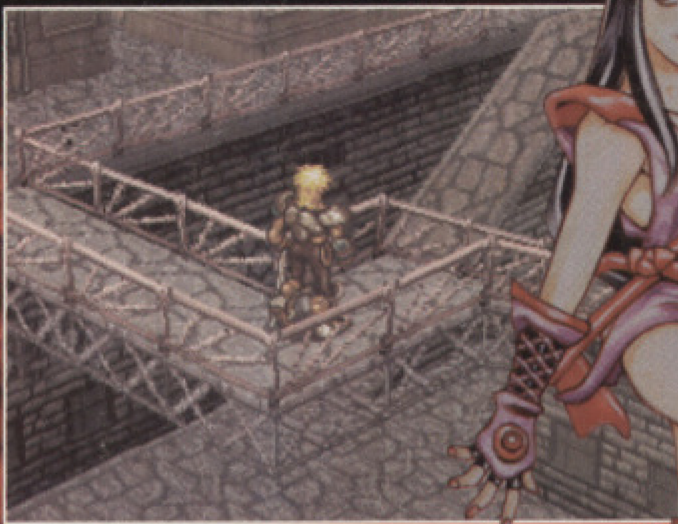


Ryu Ya in full flyte. banzai, suckers!



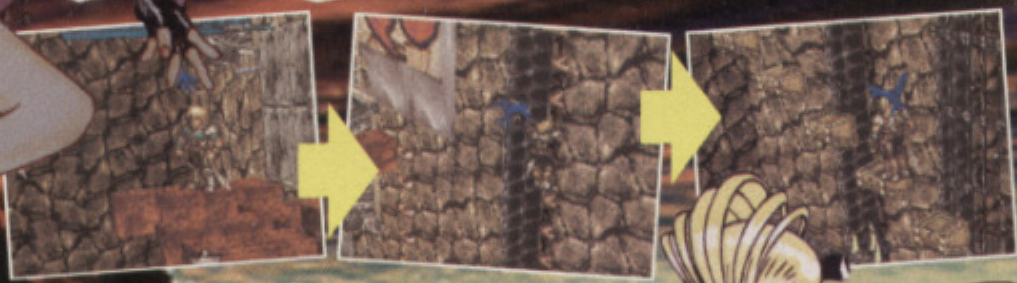








The level of background detail is pretty awe-inspiring, with this network of 3-D gantries crossing the town.



DOT ON THE LANDSCAPE

Zooming the view in and out is simple, and it's possible to play from a far-removed position. This usually displays a vast amount of detail in the surrounding scenery, causing slight slowdown, but the view is still magnificent.



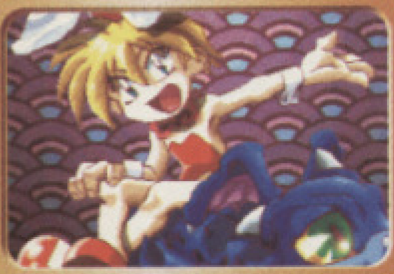




The customs men look like some kind of Viking nazis in wellington boots. Whatever turns you on...



KEIO FLYING SQUADRON 2



BY: VICTOR

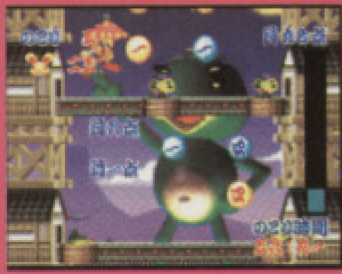
GAME TYPE: PLATFORM

PLAYERS: 1

PRICE: TBA

RELEASE: AUGUST

COMPLETE





Lets be honest, there's something distinctly dodgy about Japan's 'harmless' infatuation with under-age, under-dressed and over-developed school girls. From bands to comics to films, it permeates their culture, and more recently has proven to be extremely popular in video games too. Which leads me on to the matter at hand.

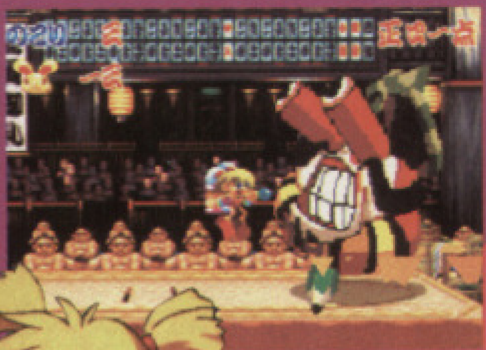
Some of you may remember the original Keio's Flying Squadron, a bizarre horizontally scrolling shoot 'em up released on the Mega CD a few years ago. As shoot 'em ups go it wasn't bad, but what distinguished it from the rest of the pack was its, er, 'unusual' premise. Keio featured a ten year old girl dressed in a Playboy bunny suit riding on the back of a baby dragon called Spot. And that was the sanest part of the game.

Now, while such things are common place in the land of the rising sun, there isn't exactly an abundance of surreal dragon-riding bunny girl games over here. At least, not that I'm aware of. But thanks to JVC that looks set to change. Keio's Flying Squadron 2 is coming to the Saturn, and it's every bit as weird as its predecessor.





In the ghost house Keio battles an evil entity possessed by the spirit of Monty Python!





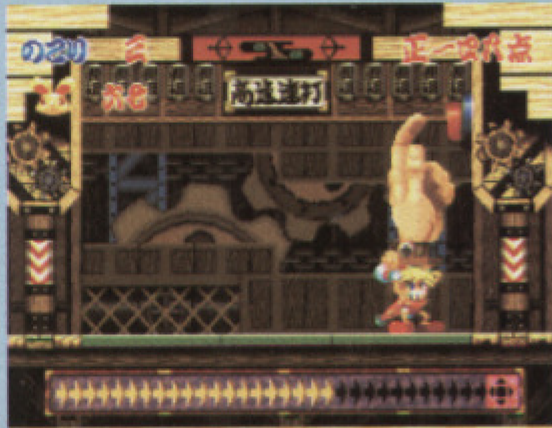






MY ELEPHANTS ARE ON FIRE!

We couldn't quite work out the specifics of the game's story, but it seems to involve saving the capital city of Edo from certain destruction at the hands of the evil Dr Pon. On her way, our heroine Rami will encounter such 'intriguing' adversaries as suicidal dogs, artillery pigs, killer cuckoo clocks and a giant face whose features keep dropping off! Dali would be pleased. Or a fish.









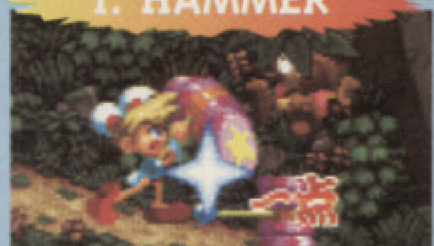
YING ON 2

DEFEND YOURSELF



As well as the genre trademark 'bottom bounce', Rami can pick up various items strewn about the landscape (regardless of size) and lob them at her assailants. In addition she can also carry one of three weapons, each with its own special properties. Let's take a closer look.

1. HAMMER



It may be almost as big as Rami, but it doesn't stop her wielding it in an 'It's a Knock Out' fashion. Take a swing at the enemy fluffies, or hurl it for a long distance attack.

2. BROLLY



Found on the later stages the brolly can be used both to prod enemies as an offensive weapon, and (when opened) to prolong the distance of Rami's jumps.

3. BOW & ARROW



The bow and arrow can be angled in any direction, and if you hold down the button, Rami will pull back for an extra powerful shot. It's not much cop close up, however.

FULL MOTION JACKET

Taking full advantage of the CD medium, Keio 2 features numerous full motion video anime sequences, produced by one of Japan's most prestigious animation studios – 'Studio Pierrot' (well that's what it says here). In keeping with the rest of the game, these clips are predictably 'wacky', but unfortunately our preview copy is in Japanese so they're meaningless. Not that they'd mean anything in English anyway.





Whack those bears and they release a scroll with Japanese writing on!

HOTCH POTCH!

While the original Keio Flying Squadron was a pure shoot 'em up, Keio 2 mixes in a veritable cornucopia of game genres over its 19 levels, including platform sections, underwater sections, chase sections and even a ride on a roller coaster. There are the familiar horizontally scrolling shoot 'em levels (neigh on identical to the original Keio) but this time they play second fiddle to the platform stages.



As underwater bits go, this rates among the best!







BY: JVC

GAME TYPE: DRIVING

PRICE: TBA

RELEASE: AUGUST

1-2 PLAYERS

COMPLETE

Some people might think that what the Saturn needs right now is a Ridge Racer clone. To be honest, it's not a thought which keeps us awake, but here is JVC with Highway 2000, apparently a "gamer's wildest dream".

You might wonder what Highway 2000, with its perfomance cars and urban tracks, has that Daytona, Sega Rally and Need for Speed do not. The brief answer is sex, or at least, sex appeal. JVC are blatantly trying to sell the game off the back of some young totty, AKA your co-drivers.

Video footage of 'pretty young things' is integrated with the game, and when you mess up, your girl opens the car door and takes to the hills. Nothing less than beating the pack of nine other cars will be enough to keep her tucked up behind her air bag.

If you get the impression JVC are on one-track with this game, you would be wrong. There are six, and all are set within the urban freeway-style environment that typifies Namco's classic Ridge Racer. Highway 2000 is actually a European restyling of Dead Heat, a Japanese game that was released six months ago. We'll judge how it's held up next month.







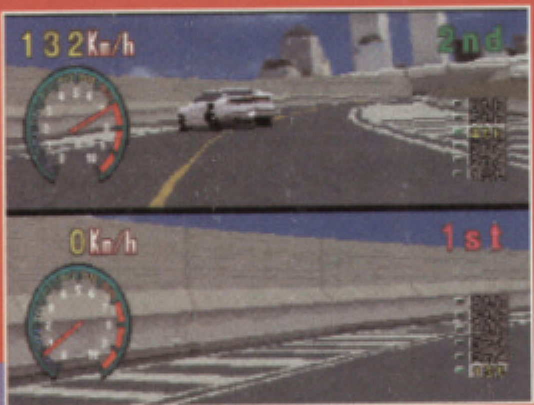




HIGHWAY 2000

HORIZONTALLY CHALLENGED

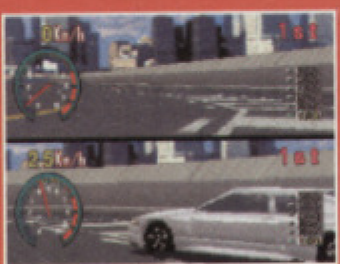
Highway 2000 has a split-screen mode, a feature rapidly becoming the norm in Saturn racing games. Highway 2000 uses a conventional horizontal split, and maintains the speed of the single-player mode for these 'battle' encounters, with high walls replacing most of the scenery detail.



Your bird'll walk if you handle your car like a wet bus.



Caption Caption Caption Caption Caption Caption Caption Caption













GIRLS ON FILM

Inserting digi-babes is quite common in Japanese games, but JVC are taking the unusual step of refilming these sections with new actresses, to give the game a more European look. They are likely to be just as mouthy though if you don't come up to scratch.



BY: INFOGRAMES

GAME TYPE: SHOOT 'EM UP

1 PLAYERS

PRICE: IMPORT (£85)

RELEASE: AUGUST

COMPLETE

Designed for the CD-i (but don't let that put you off) Chaos Control is Infogrames' summer entrant into the interactive movie blaster stakes. Since there's no other discernible competition, we suppose it has to win by default. Just to make sure though, Infogrames have added the seductive compatibility that comes with Sega's Virtua Gun. Chaos Control will be only the second game after Virtua Cop to use the light gun peripheral. It also works with further Saturn add-ons like Virtua Stick and Mouse. The game kicks off with arrival of the Kesh Rhan space armada in the solar system – the aliens have the express aim of eliminating mankind. They found Nasa's Voyager space craft from the '70s in a distant galaxy, decided that earthlings were a bunch of flare-wearing tossers and set out on their mission of destruction. You are a manga-babe with other ideas and you tackle the Kesh across a series of pre-rendered flightpaths controlling a cursor and an endless laser supply. The gameplay is a lot like Namco games like Starblade and Galaxian 3. Chaos Control is out dead soon, and until then here are some electrifying inner-spatial preview shots from our bootleg disc.









Obliterate fire hydrants, aliens and traffic wardens with your lethal laser cannons. OK, we lied about the fire hydrants.

CHAOS CONTROL

ONE ON ONE

Chaos Control mirrors Virtua Cop by having a simultaneous two-player mode, with extra enemies added to maintain the challenge level. The objective here is not to be outdone in the scoring stakes.





Because all the enemy craft are streamed off the CD they keep their detail even up close.

CLOUDY SKIES

The levels in Chaos Control are pre-rendered, so you find yourself taking a similar flightpath each time. The skill comes with reacting to the hordes of enemy ships that swarm across the landscape. Since these are also pre-rendered, the CPU hides destroyed vessels behind a rather artificial cloud.



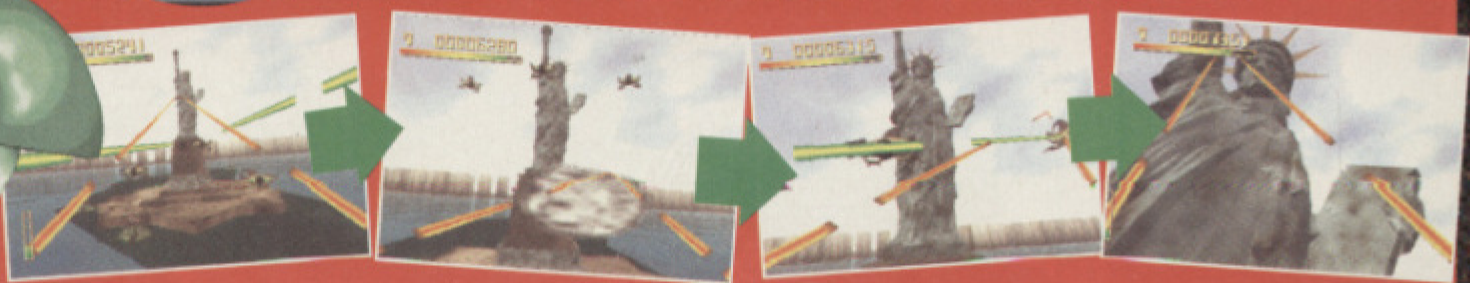












A heated battle takes place around the Statue of Liberty. If you look carefully you can see some stone nose hair.

STEVE'S TIPS

Wotcha.
Sonic here. I've taken time out from my busy schedule as an international videogame megastar to come and host the MMS tips section this month. Actually, that's not entirely true. I need the money. Work's been a bit thin on the ground recently. It's that blasted NIGHTS bloke hogging the Saturn limelight. Everywhere I go its NIGHTS this, Nightopia that. I'm supposed to be Sega's mascot. Me! Not some jumped up anorexic harlequin in girly lycra! If the Sonic X-Treme programmers don't get a move on I'll be forced to take a trip down the DHSS with Astal, Wonderboy and Alex Kidd. Anyway, send your tips to my personal assistant at: Dan's Tips, Mean Machines Sega, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. There are prizes on offer, though really they should all go to me.



SATURN

BAKU BAKU ANIMAL

HIDDEN LEAGUE MODE

Baku Baku is the best puzzle game featuring a giant lion head EVER! And there's a hidden multi-player Japanese League mode to be found in the UK version too. Simply go to the 'green leaves and eyes' title screen and press B, A, C, up, B, A, C, up (Bacu Bacu, geddit?). So for all those of you who are just scanning the tips section in the newsagent with no intention of buying the mag at all, at least it's an easy code to rememeber. Cheapskates!



EURO 96

VIEW THE CREDITS

Alex P Jones from my own Somerset has sent in this code to view the end sequence of Euro '96 without having to go to the trouble of actually playing it. Go to the title screen with the Euro '96 England logo and then hold down L, R, X, Y, Z and START for five seconds then release. Hey presto, instant credits. And I know that Euro '96 talk is old hat now... but we was robbed! Robbed!

UEFA euro 96 England



PANZER DRAGOON ZWEI

SECRET DRAGONS
SPECIAL ENDING
SCORE BIG ON FIRST LEVEL
PANDORA'S BOX REVEALED

Everyone criticised Panzer Zwei for being too easy on its initial release, but little did they know that completing the game was only the beginning. The real quest lies in uncovering all the game's many secrets..



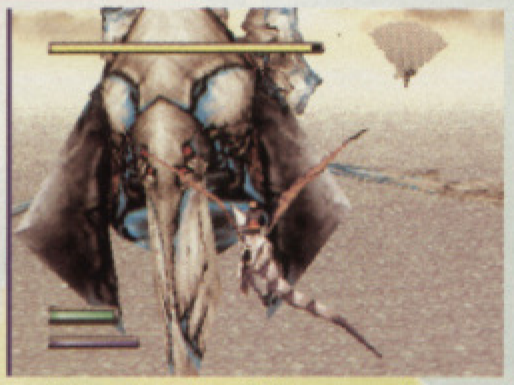
SECRET DRAGONS

There are five secret dragons hidden in Panzer Zwei, two of which can be reached during an ordinary game (Skydart and Type 1) and the other three who can only be accessed through Pandora's Box (Pup, Type 2 and Guardian Dragon). To reach the Skydart and Type 1 you must take 'route 2' through episodes two and three, and 'route 3' through episode four. You must also obtain a shoot down ratio of above 90% on every episode. If everything goes well you will change into the Skydart for episode five and the Type_1 for the final episode. Cool!



SPECIAL ENDING

If Lagi manages to transform into the Type_1 (the dragon from the original Panzer Dragoon) in time for the final episode, and you defeat both bosses, you will be rewarded with a special ending that links the story of Panzer Zwei with its predeccessor.



Er, do the words David and Goliath mean anything to you!







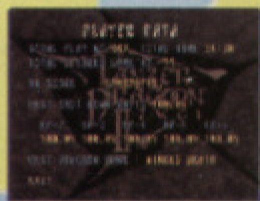
SCORE BIG!

If you go to the player data screen and hold down the L and R buttons you will be taken to a secret data screen showing times and scores for each individual episode, including the 'Starting Destiny' level. It is possible to get a huge score on this stage by repeatedly shooting the flying granite fish (it appears half way through the level) right in the blue undercarriage.



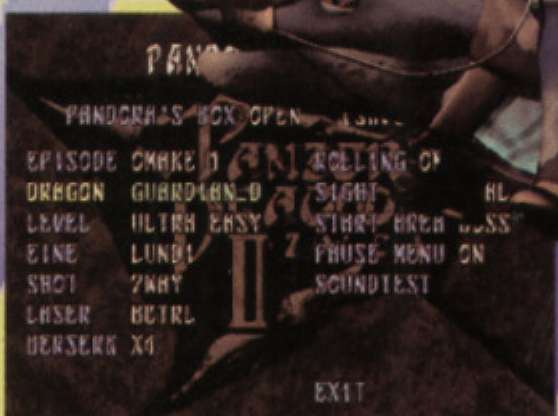


Keep shooting as your score doubles with each hit! Incidentally, this is the geezer from episode three.



PANDORA'S BOX

1) To open Pandora's Box for the first time you must do one of two things. Either a) complete the game or b) clock in at least two and a half hours game time.
2) To open EVERY option in Pandora's Box you must a) clock in thirty hours game time, b) complete the game and defeat the second dragon boss without dying, c) complete the game with a 100% kill ratio on every episode. You may not have to do ALL of these things at once, but you now know what to try.



NEED FOR SPEED

SECRET TRACK AND CAR

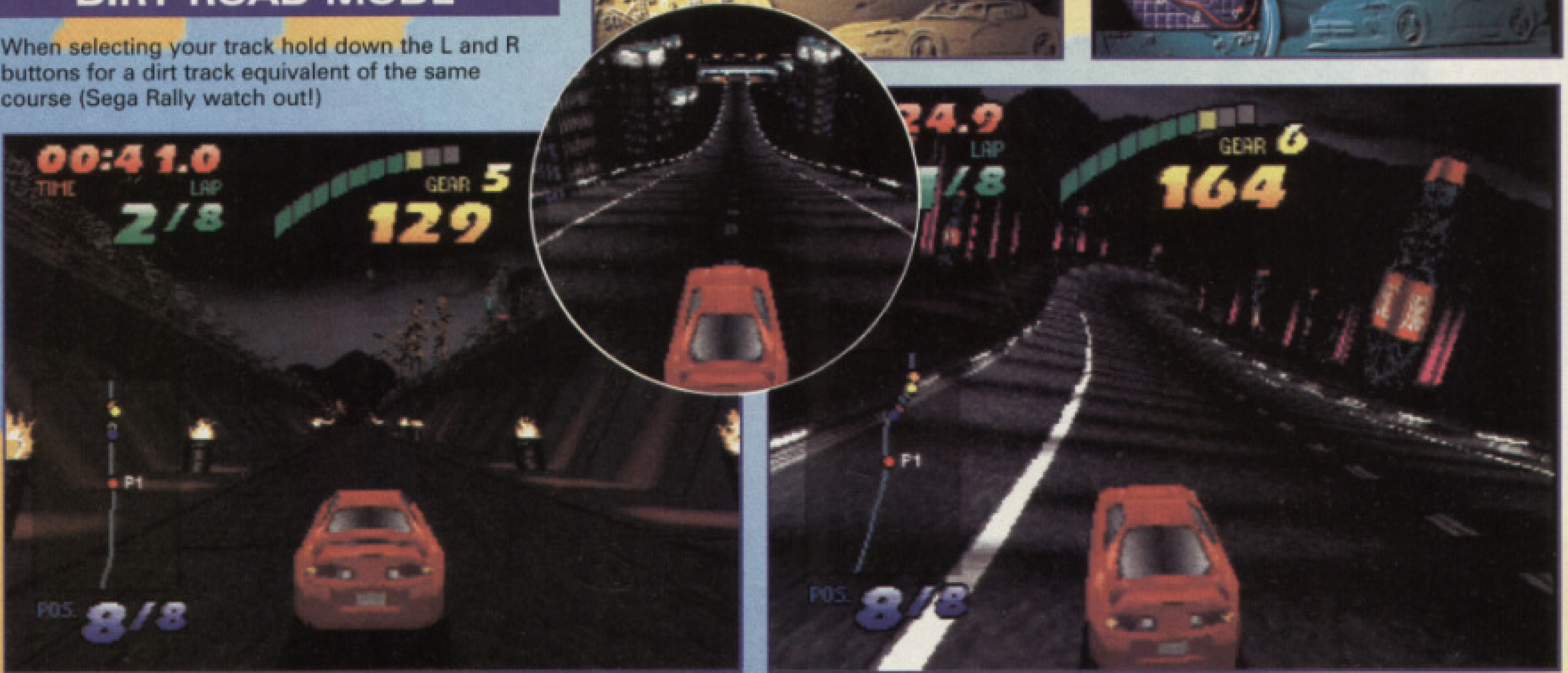
Go to the tournament mode password screen then enter this code: TSYBNS. Next, exit the tournament mode and go to the ordinary one player game. You will now be able to select a cool new track: Lost Vegas. Enter GNMPLY for the Lost Vegas track and the hidden 'warrior' car. Thanks to Andrew Webber from Exwick in Exeter for that one.





DIRT ROAD MODE

When selecting your track hold down the L and R buttons for a dirt track equivalent of the same course (Sega Rally watch out!)



GOLDEN AXE: THE DUEL

SHORTEN LOADING TIME

Not a bad beat 'em up. Just not a particularly good one. Anyway, in versus mode, when you win a round and the words 'xxx wins' appear, press Pause then Left Shift and a shortcut select mode should appear. You can now select your fighters without loading! Well, every little bit helps.







VAMPIRE HUNTER

MORRIGAN COSTUME CHANGE

It is possible to have Morrigan change into civvy clothes when you win a round, instead of performing a victory pose. After you've floored your opponent (yes, you've got to win first), simply hold down either all three kicks or all three punches until the start of the next round. And there you have it. One natty set of slamin' threads.







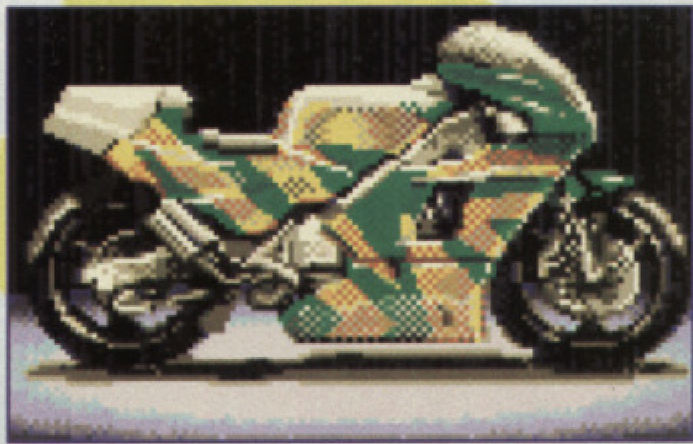
MEGADRIVE

ROAD RASH 3

GOT A NEW MOTOR?

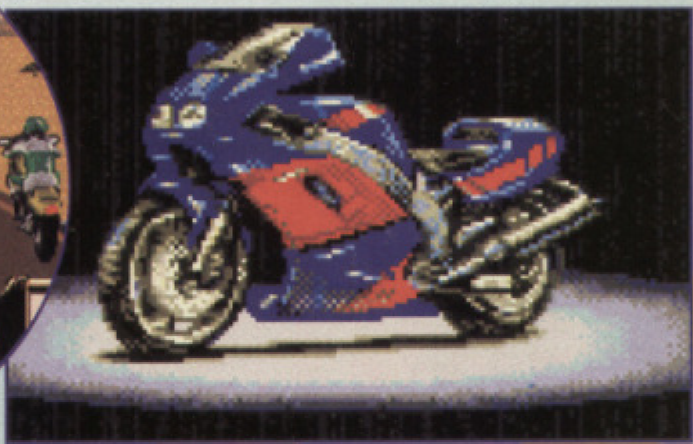
For a hot time on a hot bike, go to the password screen and set the fourth digit to '2' and the sixth digit to 'U'. Alternatively you could just enter the password '15s9 puo3' for $200,000, all the upgrades and the best bike in the game (one you can't buy). But hey, that would be cheating!









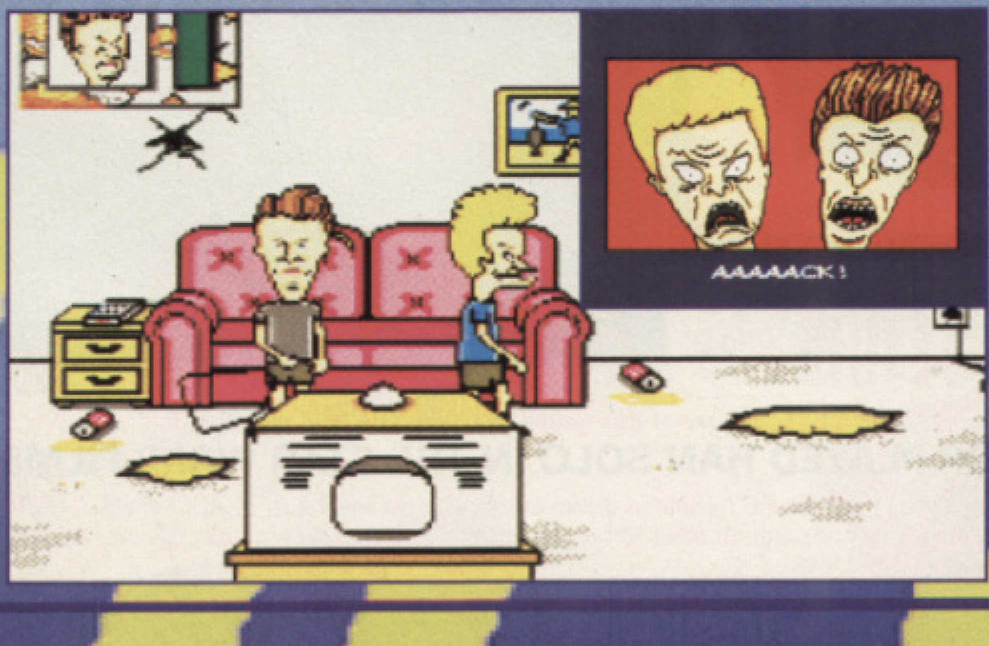


BEAVIS AND BUTTHEAD

ER...LIKE, LOADS OF COOL STUFF!

Huh huh. Huh. Hey Beavis, if you, like, enter the password 'aPjDY 5fF+D TkrEN' at the options screen then you'll, like, warp to your mom's living room. Then go into the bedroom and they'll be, like, loads of cool stuff there. Including the milkman.
Yeah! The milkman! Yeah!
Hehehehehe..er, shut up buttmunch! That's not funny!
Huh huh. It is too, dillweed!
Heheheh! Don't make me kick your ass! Fart knocker! (etc, etc, ad infinitum)





COMIX ZONE

LEVEL SELECT

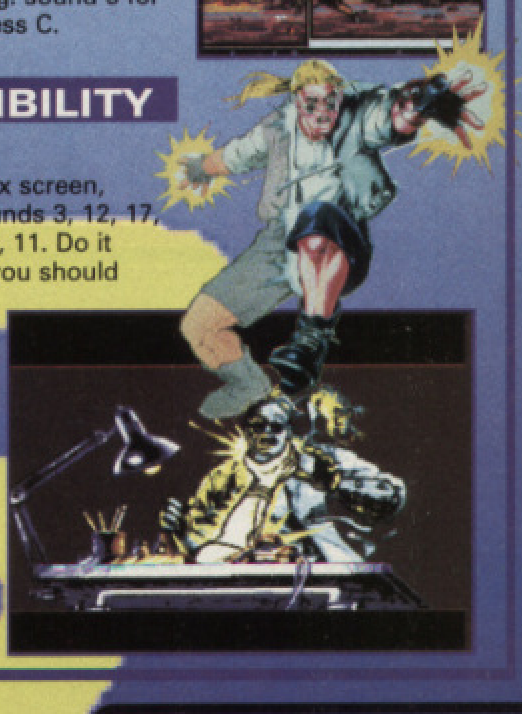
An interesting variation on the scrolling beat 'em up this. Underrated too, if you ask me. But no-one did, so on with the show. On the Jukeboxscreen, press C on sounds 14, 15, 18, 5, 13, 1, 3, 18, 15, 6. A voice should say "Oh Yeah!". Then, simply set the sound to the level you want to play (eg. sound 5 for level 5) and press C.





INVINCIBILITY

On the Jukebox screen, press C on sounds 3, 12, 17, 2, 2, 10, 2, 7, 7, 11. Do it correctly and you should hear a voice say "Oh Yeah!", indicating that you are now as hard as week old bread. Time to go to work!



STARFIGHTER GIVEAWAY

Telstar's new space combat game puts you in the cockpit of a Predator Mark IV planetary assault vehicle. The year is 3037, and you're flying for the Fednet Space Corps, defending the outermost planets from ruthless rebels armed with fighter squadrons and land-based attack weaponry.
Starfighter 3000 features 60 missions spread over 4 principal levels – refine your flying skills and pummel your way through the opposition using beam lasers, air-to-ground missiles, air-to-air missiles, multi-missiles, mega lasers and, most spectacularly, the 'electronic counter measure' smart bomb. The whole caboodle has been keeping us busy for hours at MEAN MACHINES towers.
The game is released on Saturn format on 26 August, price £44.99, but you could get your hands on a copy for the price of a stamp and a postcard by entering our competition!



THE PRIZES

Five winners will each receive Starfighter 3000 and a limited edition Starfighter 3000 flying jacket (it's cold in space, after all).
Five runners up will each receive a Starfighter 3000 game.







THE QUESTION

To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer this question about a famous space pilot...

WHICH ACTOR PLAYED HAN SOLO IN THE STAR WARS FILMS?

Put you answer on the back of a postcard or sealed down envelope and send it to SEARCH FOR A STAR at the editorial address. The usual competition rules apply. Ten winners will be drawn from the correct entries on Monday 16 September. Good luck!


WIN! NINTENDO 64! WIN! A SATURN OR PLAYSTATION PLUS THE TOP THREE GAM
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Street Fighter Alpha: Warriors' Dreams

WITH THE OFFICIAL RELEASE OF THE RATHER SUPERB STREET FIGTHER ALPHA LAST MONTH, WE WERE SOMEWHAT DISMAYED TO DISCOVER THAT THE ENGLISH MANUAL CONTAINED NO MENTION OF THE THREE SECRET CHARACTERS, OR THEIR MOVES. NEVER FEAR ALPHA FANS, MEAN MACHINES SEGA IS HERE TO REMEDY THAT SITUATION RIGHT SHARPISH!



TO SELECT: On the character select screen press and hold down the 'L' shoulder button then move to the random box. Now press back, back, back, down, down, down then jab and medium punch simultaneously.

TO FIGHT: A) Win 10 final round victories with Super Combos before the last opponent or B) On the character select screen highlight the character you wish to fight against Akuma, then press START immediately followed by L, R and B simultaneously. Keep the L,R and B buttons all held till the start of the round.



AKUMA - The Mightiest Warrior

Akuma is a powerful warrior who trained for years with Ryu and Ken's master, Shen Long, before turning his attention to the study of the dark arts. Like Ryu, Akuma lives for the fight, travelling from country to country in search of a worthwhile challenge. Akuma possess the widest range of special techniques of all the characters in Alpha, as well as the most powerful attack in the game: the fearsome instant hellish death stike.

Super fireball. Very, very tricky!



Overhead throw!



Super fireball juggle finish! Take that!



Instant Hellish Death Strike!





AKUMA: SURE KILLING TECHNIQUES	
MIGHTY WAVE FIST	↓ ↘ → + PUNCH
SCORCHING WAVE FIST	← ↙ ↓ ↘ → + PUNCH
SKY CLEAVING WAVE FIST	JUMP THEN ↓ ↘ → + PUNCH
MIGHTY RISING DRAGON FIST	→ ↓ ↘ + PUNCH
TORNADO SKY-CLEAVING LEG	↓ ↙ ← + KICK
AIR-TORNADO SKY-CLEAVING LEG	JUMP THEN ↓ ↙ ← + KICK
TITAN'S SKY FLASH	→ ↓ ↘ OR ← ↓ ↙ + KICK X 3 OR PUNCH X 3
HUNDRED DEMON ATTACK	↓ ↘ → ↗ + PUNCH THEN P OR K
SUPER COMBOS	
DESTRUCTIVE RISING DRAGON	↓ ↘ → ↓ ↘ + PUNCH
DESTRUCTIVE MIGHTY WAVE FIST	→ ↘ ↓ ↙ ← → ↘ ↓ ↙ ← + PUNCH
DEMON MIGHTY SKY-CLEAVER	JUMP THEN ↓ ↘ → ↓ ↘ → + PUNCH
INSTANT HELLISH DEATH STRIKE	LIGHT PUNCH, LIGHT PUNCH, →, RELEASE →, LIGHT KICK, FIERCE PUNCH



ULTIMATE COMBO

Cross up with a medium kick...



follow with a light kick...



and a jab two-in-one into...



a level three super dragon punch!



Scores 11 hits and is hard to block!



Does more damage than his death strike!





M.BISON - MASTER OF PSYCHO POWER

Bison has dedicated his life to mastering the forces of Psycho energy. He is the uniting force behind the Street Fighter tournaments, and MUST BE DESTROYED!



TO SELECT: On the character select screen press and hold down 'L' shoulder button then move to the random box. Now press back, back, down, down, back, down, down then jab and medium punch simultaneously.

TO FIGHT: To acccess the Dramatic Battle Vs M.Bison start a two player game in arcade mode then have both players press and hold the L button, press up twice, release the L button, press up twice again, then player one should hold X and player two Z.

M.BISON: SURE KILLING TECHNIQUES	
PSYCHO SHOT	HOLD ← THEN → + PUNCH
HEAD PRESS	HOLD ↓ THEN ↑ + KICK + K OR P
DOUBLE KNEE PRESS	HOLD ← THEN → + KICK
BISON POWER	→ ↓ ↘ OR ← ↓ ↙ + P X 3 OR K X 3
SOMERSAULT SKULL DIVER	HOLD ↓ THEN ↑ + PUNCH THEN K OR P
SUPER COMBOS	
PSYCHO CRUSHER	HOLD ← THEN → ← → + PUNCH
DOUBLE KNEE PRESS	HOLD ← THEN → ← → + KICK

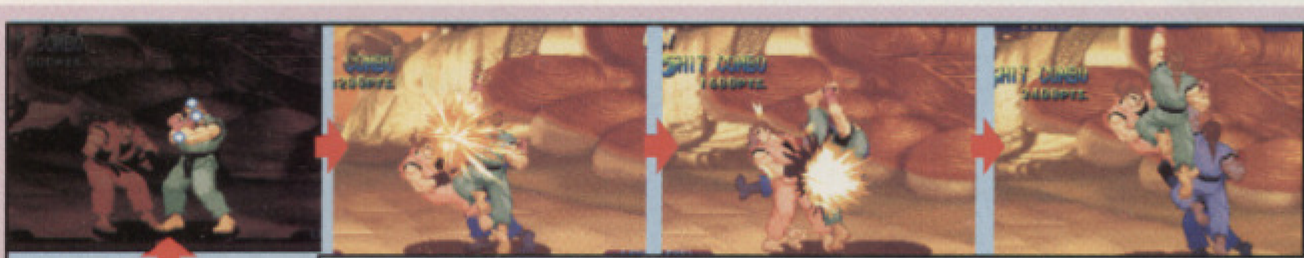


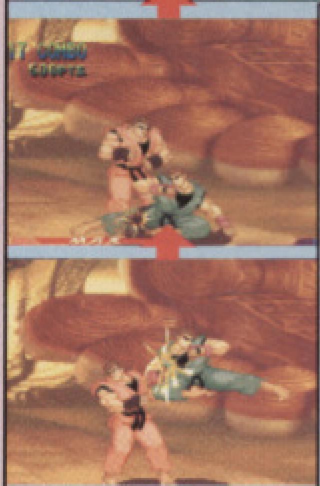




ULTIMATE COMBO









TO SELECT: On the character select screen press and hold down both the 'L' and 'R' shoulder buttons then move to the random box. Now press in sequence Y, B, A, X.

TO FIGHT: Pick the same winning quote five times in a row. Press the L and R buttons and hold Up at the end of a round to select the same quote.



DAN - THE AVENGING HERO

The most recent addition to the Street Fighter family, Dan, is a curious blend of Ryu and Ken. As a child he watched helpless as Sagat fought and killed his father (though he managed to take out one of his eyes). He enters the tournament purely seeking revenge.

Cross up with medium kick then two in one a '3' villanous fist!

ULTIMATE COMBO





Despite some impressive moves, Dan is a very difficult character to use well. Alright, we'll admit it. He's pants.

DAN: SURE KILLING TECHNIQUES	
STYLISTIC FIST	↓ ↘ → + PUNCH
SHINING DRAGON FIST	→ ↓ ↘ + PUNCH
SKY-CLEAVING KICK	↓ ↙ ← + KICK
SUPER COMBOS	
SKY-SHAKING STYLISTIC FIST	↓ ↘ → ↓ ↘ → + PUNCH
BRIGHT DRAGON RAGING FIRE	↓ ↘ → ↓ ↘ + KICK
WINNING VILLAINOUS FIST	↓ ↙ ← ↓ ↙ ← + KICK

SONIC TIPS SPECIAL

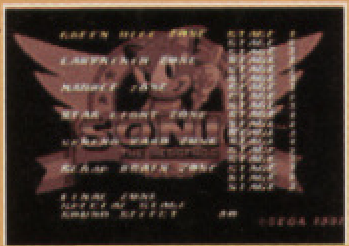


I know these tips aren't bang up to date, but we've been getting so many letters from you lot asking for cheats on all the Sonic games that we've decided to put an end to it once and for all.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 1991

LEVEL SELECT

At the title screen hold A then press Up, Down, Left, Right. When you hear the chime, press Start. If that doesn't work, try Up, Down, Left, Right, hold A, and then press Start. After doing this once, you only need to hold Start + A to enter the level select.



COLLECT EMERALDS AND CONTINUES

Use the Level Select cheat (see above) and warp to the Special Zone. After you have collected the Emerald and entered into the Green Hill Zone, press Reset. Re-enter the Level Select Special Zone and you will have kept the Emerald you just got! Keep going till you have accumulated them all, then start the game proper.





You can do some pretty bizarre things with the debug mode.

DEBUG MODE

At the title screen, press Up, C, Down, C, Left, C, Right, C and listen for the chime.

Then, after starting a new game, hold A until you see Sonic. If you see a bunch of hex numbers on the top of the screen, you're in Debug Mode. Press B to start, er, debugging. This only works on the first production releases of Sonic.

CONFUSED DEMO

You can confuse Sonic during the demo by pressing all three action buttons repeatedly. Sonic will lose his place in the pattern and possibly even die. Useless, but there you go.

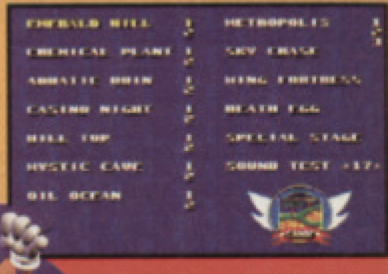
50,000 BONUS POINTS

For a 50,000 point bonus, pass any Zone in less than 30 seconds.

SONIC 2 1992

LEVEL SELECT

Go to the options screen, select Sound Select and then PLAY in order sounds 19, 65, 9, 17, then push C. Press Start to return to the main screen, and when Sonic and Tails appear, hold A and press Start.



Handy things, level selects. Not that we need them or anything.

DEBUG MODE

To enter Debug Mode, play these sounds from the level select screen: 1, 9, 9, 2, 1, 1, 2, 4. Press START and hold A. From there on it's just like the original Sonic.

SUPER SONIC

To become Super Sonic without collecting all the Chaos Emeralds, first enable the level select. At the level select menu, go to the sound test item, and play sounds in this order: 4, 1, 2, 6. You should hear the music you get when you win a chaos emerald. Now select any level, get 50 rings, and jump.



More debug mode madness. Create a trap for Sonic then guide him into it! Hahahahaha! Er, ahem.

MEGA SONIC

Go to Oil Ocean, Act 2, and run forward until you see the green jet springs. Hop up on the very last one and hold right. You will hit a pile of spikes, then get stuck in the side of the wall. Jump out and you will be Mega Sonic. Mega Sonic is faster and can jump higher than Super Sonic, but he can still lose rings when hit. Be warned, this is only a glitch.



EXTRA CONTINUES

First enable the level select. Then, at the options screen, play these sounds in this order: 1, 1, 2, 4. Now move the highlight to the 'Player Select' field of the options screen and press START.

COLLECT ALL CHAOS EMERALDS

Start the game as you normally would. Get a Chaos Emerald, reset the game, and start the game from the options menu. You will keep the emeralds you have gained so far each time you start from the optionsmenu.

SUPER TAILS

While in Debug Mode, create and position a 'Transfer Box' monitor. When you hit it and you are Super Sonic, you lose all your powers but stay yellow. Tails looks the same but has invincibility (little stars flashing around him.



SONIC 3 1993

UP LOOP



To do this trick you must get to the first level of the Launch Base Zone. Set off the first alarm, stop Sonic in the middle of it, and do a Spin-Dash attack (press Down.) The flybots will continue to attack, and eventually their value will increase to 10,000 points! Every five flybots will gain you a life and, if you're patient enough, you can earn up to 99 lives!



LEVEL SELECT

This code is hard to do, but keep trying because it DOES work. As the screen fades to black after the SEGA logo, press Up, Up, Down,Down, Up, Up, Up, Up. If you did it right, you'll hear a chime. You can now go to Level Select by pressing down twice on the title screen to reveal a new option.

SLOW MOTION

First enable the Level Select code. Now, while playing, you can pause the game and use A to restart, B for slow motion, and C for frame advance.

BONUS STAGE

For a bonus stage, enable Level Select, then play tune 01 and 0F. Finally, highlight stage 2 and hold A while pressing Start.



You've got to master all these bonus rounds if you want to get Hyper Sonic!

DEBUG MODE

Do the level select, but instead of pressing Start to choose your starting level, press A + Start. Once the action starts, press C to create an item, B to toggle between items, and A to select items.

SUPER SONIC

To become Super Sonic without getting all the Chaos Emeralds, first enable the level select and debug mode. When the game begins, create a power-up box. There should be an 'S' on the box. Jump on it, grab 50 rings then jump to go Super.



No, that's Super Sonic not Hyper Sonic. Honestly. Can't you tell? Tsch!



HYPER SONIC, HYPER KNUCKLES OR SUPER TAILS!

Connect your Sonic & Knuckles cartridge to Sonic 3. Collect the first seven emeralds before you make it to Mushroom Hill Zone. After that, collect the other seven emeralds (the Super Emeralds) before you make it to the end of Lava Reef Zone. Now just collect 50 rings and jump twice.





SONIC AND KNUCKLES 1994

SONIC AND KNUCKLES SPINBALL

If you have Sonic Spinball, you can access a special bonus stage. To activate, insert your Sonic Spinball cartridge into Sonic & Knuckles, then turn on your Megadrive. When the "No Way" message appears, hold A + B + C and press Start.



Hyper Knuckles - when he grabs the wall all the baddies onscreen die!

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG LOCK ON CODE

Connect Sonic & Knuckles to the original Sonic the Hedgehog. When the message "No Way!" appears, press A + B + C and Start. When the "Get Blue Spheres!" message appears, enter '5092 6073 6399' to warp to bonus level 1000. In the menu screen, you can switch between Sonic and Knuckles by pressing any button. Use the red cursor to start the round as Knuckles, and the blue to begin as Sonic.



Hyper Sonic! Hurrah! When he double jumps everything onscreen dies! Ace!



BONUS GAME A RAMA!

Plug any game developed by Sega into your Sonic & Knuckles cart. When the "No Way" screen appears, press and hold A + B + C and press Start. You'll be sent to the 3D bonus stage and can play hundreds of constantly changing levels. This trick also works with Bubsy II and may work with other non-Sega games.



More Hyper Sonic action. It's tough getting him though. Only for hardcore Sonic fans.

Exhumed

BY SEGA

RELEASE SEPTEMBER

PRICE £44.99

GAME TYPE DOOM

BREAK DOWN

1 PLAYERS

ORIGINALITY

OPTIONS

CONTROL JOYPAD

GAME DIFFICULTY TOUGH

CONTINUES SAVE GAME

SKILL LEVELS 1

RESPONSIVENESS OK

CHALLENGE

ORIGIN

A new game by Lobotomy Software that uses the Duke Nukem 3D engine, which in turn owes a huge debt to Doom.

ACTION

GAME AIM

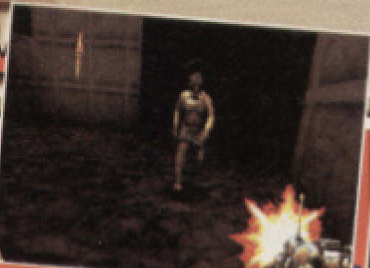
Guide your character around the 3D landscape blasting creatures and solving puzzles.

STRATEGY

REFLEXES

BEAT THIS

REACH THE FLAMETHROWER







In the beginning there was Wolfenstein 3D – a slick first person perspective shoot 'em up that redefined the way we look at 3D blasters. It was slick, it was violent, and thanks to its Nazi-bashing overtones, it was banned in Germany. Wolfenstein 3D was a technological marvel and its creators, id software, were hailed as programming gurus. However, not even Wolfenstein could prepare us for what came next...



Doom, the sequel to Wolfenstein, hit the PC in 1991 and took the 'corridor' game (as the Japanese call them) to new levels of depravity. It was a hands down, no-holds-barred festival of violence, and despite having absolutely nothing to do with Nazis, got banned in Germany anyway. On principle no doubt. Doom has since been superceded by its polygon sequel (Quake – also banned in Germany) and a whole host of derivative clones, most notably the excellent Duke Nukem 3D (which, funnily enough, our German cousins will NOT be enjoying). So, er, what's all this got to do with SEGA? Well, apart from the fact that both Doom and Duke Nukem 3D are set for a Saturn release later this year (with Quake a high probability), this latest offering from Lobotomy is the first Saturn game to utilise the brilliant 'Build' graphics engine as seen in Duke Nukem 3D. How well has it translated to the Saturn? That, my friends, is the $64,000 question...

MEGA GAME







AZTEC ADVENTURES!



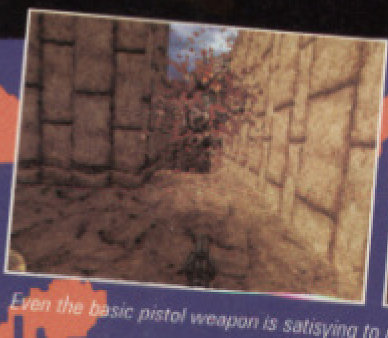
One of the major differences between Exhumed and the many Doom clones currently doing the rounds is its premise. Exhumed is set in Egypt in the 1920s, so expect a full complement of tombs, sarcophagi and pyramids. You play the part of veteran explorer Leigh Singer, an archaeologist who is unwillingly caught up in a nationwide crisis when your helicopter is shot down over Karnak Valley. Venturing in to the city of Karnak you are approached by the spirit of King Rameses III, who informs you of a dastardly plot to resurrect his body and use it for the forces of evil. It must be stopped!

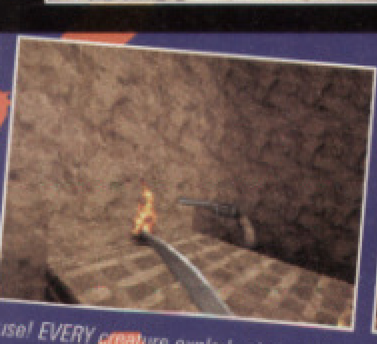


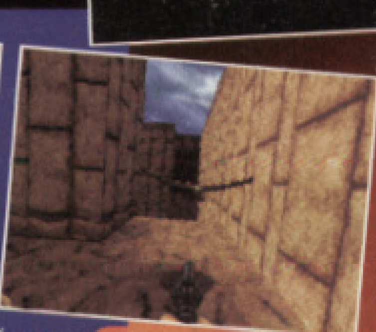




The intro is told through an ancient book.





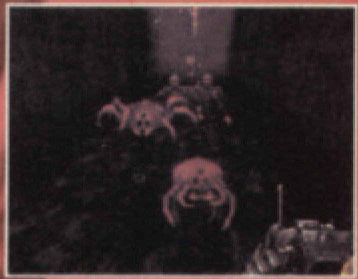




Even the basic pistol weapon is satisying to use! EVERY creature explodes in a shower of gore!







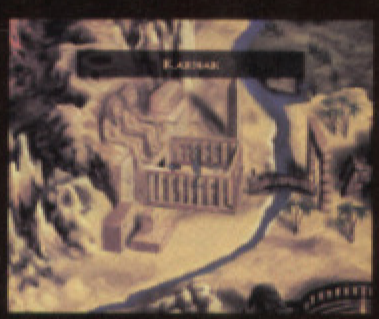
MUMMIFIED MONSTERS!

As you may have guessed by now, you're not going to be running around these tombs alone. Oh no. The forces of darkness are out to stop you, and they take the form of an army of undead and possessed creatures lurking in the shadows. At the start of the game you will face off against relatively weak enemies like poisonous spiders and killer flies, but as you progress further you come up against anubis guards, mummies, piranhas and even giant alien bosses! What's more, no matter what weapon you use, every time you kill an enemy they EXPLODE in a shower of blood and guts. Result!

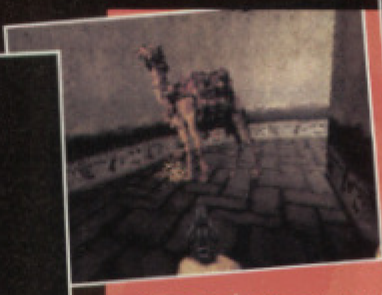
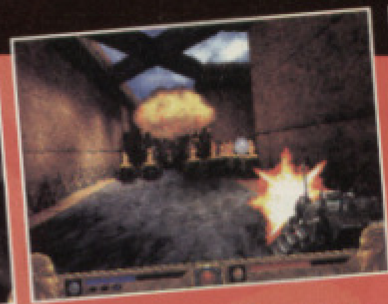




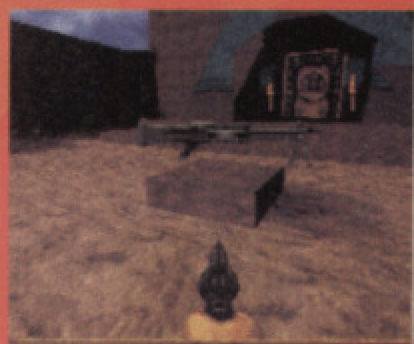
HUB CAPS



Another innovative feature of Exhumed is the level structure. Rather than just progress through the stages in a linear fashion, certain 'hub' levels have multiple exit points to new areas. As you play through the game you will acquire six different magical artifacts which grant your character new physical abilities (jump higher, breathe underwater, glide, etc), and by returning to conquered levels you can use these artifacts to reach previously inaccessible places. This adds a new RPG dimension to the game, and you really have to explore your environment carefully if you want to spot some of the hidden exits.


OSIRIAN ORDNANCE



Like any Doom game worth its salt, Exhumed features a full armoury of offensive weaponry, both human and inhuman! Choose from eight tools of destruction, including the machete, pistol, machine gun, bomb, flamethrower, magical amulet, fire ring and the mighty staff of Ra! As you destroy enemies and smash open pots blue weapon power orbs are released, which can then be used as ammo for the weapon of your choice.This adds an element of strategy to the proceedings, as you must allocate power to different weapons depending on your situation.













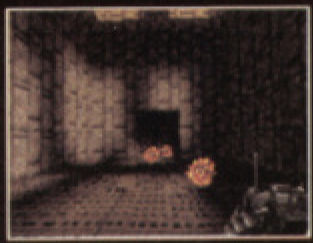
IT WAS A TIME OF HEROES...

The opening intro sequence to Exhumed features the voice talents of the man behind a thousands trailers. You may not know his name (we don't) but you'll definitely recognise his voice. Especially when he says 'but something has gone terribly wrong'. We were almost expecting 'he's a cop on the edge...', or 'and now he's fighting for the one thing he believes in...'.

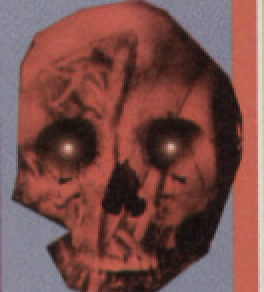
WHAT THIS BUTTON DO? AIEEEE!

Exhumed has its fair share of obstacles to deprive you of meagre amounts of energy. Fireball projectiles, arrow spitters, swinging blades, crushing walls, quicksand, lava, poisonous swamps... they're all here. On top of environmental hazards there are also some cunningly designed traps and puzzles that can prove fatal to the unwary explorer. For instance, in one underwater cavern you'll find an important-looking switch. Press it and the walls close around you, trapping you until you suffocate! Nasty!


Collect the key and unleash a barrage of fireballs.

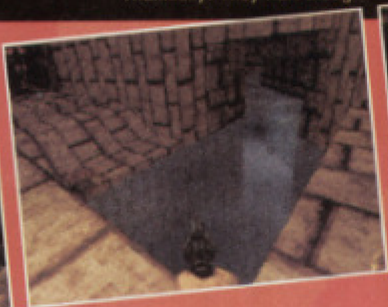

Same thing here. Only less fireballs. Thankfully! They hurt though!

COMMENT



DAN

I'm a big fan of first person perspective shooting games on the PC and was initially doubtful that the Saturn could replicate a game normally played on a £2000 turbo-nutter Pentium. More fool me! Exhumed looks incredible, with a super smooth frame rate and some of the most impressive dynamic lighting effects ever seen on the machine. The tried and tested 'search and destroy' gameplay is both exciting and satisfying, while the non-linear structure of the levels is a stroke of genius. In fact, Exhumed is even better on the Saturn then it is on the PC! A lot of people are going to tell you that this is a good game to tide you over until the release of Doom later this year, but for my money Exhumed is even better than id's classic. And that's about the highest praise you're going to get!



COMMENT



GUS

The earlier versions of Ezhumed were impressive, but the final build is simply amazing, with a speed and smoothness that only Quake on the PC can seriously challenge. This takes a long hard slash over Doom on the Playstation for many reasons. The graphics are basically much better, with lighting effects I have not seen used to the same effect in any other game. There are all kinds of new gameplay elements, jumping, laser gates, wall-climbing etc, that are new and give the game a depth missing from other games of this genre. This is not a substitute game by any means, it's a blockbuster in its own right.




CONTROL FREAK

The central character in Exhumed, Leigh, is an agile fellow. He can run, jump, swim, and even glide. This is a step up from games like Doom where thecharacter can only run, and the control system translates exceptionally well to the Saturn pad. Also, Leigh has the ability to look up and down – a necessity for spotting secrets or dealing with an enemy attack from a different height.

GRAPHICS — 92

▲ Detailed texture-mapped backgrounds and a super smooth frame rate. As good as a Pentium PC. All round swivel vision too.

ANIMATION — 91

▲ The enemy sprites move well and scale nicely...
▼ -al though, as with any bitmap, they get a bit blocky up close.

MUSIC — 92

▲ Incredible! Excellent atmospheric tunes that perfectly suit the Egyptian premise.

EFFECTS — 92

▲ Crystal clear and completely appropriate. The weapon noises are absolutely brilliant.

PLAYABILITY — 94

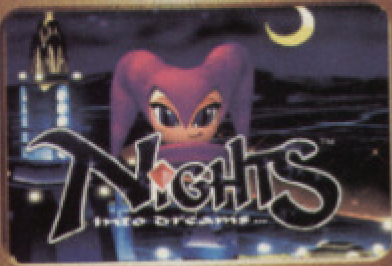
▲ Fast, furious, violent, challenging, addictive – awesome!

LASTABILITY — 95

▲ 27 levels of rock hard action, and no lives! If you die its back to the start of the level.
▼ No link up mode means no two player action.

OVERALL — 94

If you've got a Saturn you simply can't afford to be without this. All hail Exhume, the new king of 3D blasters!



BY SEGA

RELEASE SEP 5TH

PRICE TBA

GAME TYPE FLY 'EM UP!

BREAK DOWN

1-2 PLAYERS

ORIGINALITY

CHALLENGE

ACTION

STRATEGY

REFLEXES

OPTIONS

CONTROL
JOYPAD

GAME DIFFICULTY
EASY

CONTINUES
SAVE GAME

SKILL LEVELS
1

RESPONSIVENESS
EXCELLENT

ORIGIN

A brand new character from the Sonic Team of programmers, the creators of Sonic The Hedgehog.

GAME AIM

Free the children's imprisoned Ideya and defeat the evil Wizeman.

BEAT THIS

Get an A on the all courses.

Five years ago Sega turned around the battle against Nintendo and the Super NES with a platform extravaganza called Sonic the Hedgehog (you may have heard of him). The prestigious porcupine captured the hearts and minds of gamesplayers all over the world, and went on to star in numerous sequels, many of which achieved record breaking success. Sonic 2 is still the biggest selling videogame in this country!

Under the close supervision of games guru Naka Yuji – the creator of Sonic The Hedgehog – Sonic Team helped to produce a number of the prestigious Sonic sequels before disappearing from the public eye to work on a top secret project some two years ago. Now, after months of anticipation, they're back on the scene with a new character and a new game that looks set to be every bit as groundbreaking and successful as its spiky blue predecessor.

With the N64 just around the corner, and Sony giving Sega some stiff competition, the Saturn needs a spearhead title to do what Sonic did for the Megadrive. A game that plays simply yet offers an abundance of depth. A game that showcases the machine's power and technical prowess. A game that oozes charm and personality from every pore. In short, a game like NiGHTS...

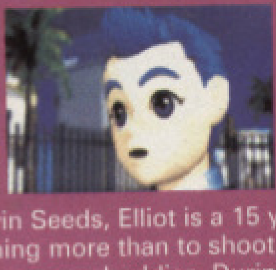




STORYVILLE!

The plot behind NiGHTS revolves around the twin dream worlds of Nightopia (nice happy dreams) and Nightmare (nasty evil dreams). For centuries the two forces have lived in balance, co-existing in symbiotic harmony until the arrival of an ancient Nightmare named Wizeman. Wizeman's power was so great that he was able to bridge the gap between the two dream worlds, and then, using an army of his own personal Nightmarians, launch an all out assault on Nightopia. Once he had established his presence in Nightopia he gave orders to his minions to steal all the Ideya (virtues) from every 'dreamer' who entered the world in an attempt to rob all humans of their ability to control dreams. Insidious stuff eh? All Dr. Robotnik wanted to do was take over the world...

PROFILE: ELLIOT EDWARDS



Hailing from the fictional town of Twin Seeds, Elliot is a 15 year old basketball champ who likes nothing more than to shoot some hoops after school with his classroom buddies. During one afternoon session he is upstaged and humiliated by a group of slam dunking seniors, and the experience gives him nightmares that erode his self confidence. Elliot is special in that he possess a small quantity of inherent red Ideya (courage) which cannot be stolen by the Nightmarians.

PROFILE CLARIS SINCLAIR

The second human star of NiGHTS is a young girl named Claris, who also lives in the town of Twin Seeds. Claris is the complete opposite of Elliot, hailing from an artistic family and pursuing a career in theatrical singing. Her spoilt lifestyle has meant that she hasn't developed the courage to face challenges on her own, and as her first big audition approaches she has nightmares about failing. Like Elliot, Claris posses red Ideya that cannot be taken by the Nightmarians.







PROFILE NiGHTS

The star of the show! NiGHTS was created by Wizeman to act as a Nightmarian general in the assault on Nightopia. However, NiGHTS's conscience got the better of him. True to his mischievous character, he rebelled against Wizeman's orders and refused to attack the defenceless Nightopians. As a punishment Wizeman consigned NiGHTS to an eternity in the Ideya Palace, a Nightopian prison where he would remain forever as a living warning to all those who dare defy the Lord of Dreams. Only Claris and Elliot have the power to free NiGHTS, and from within his prison NiGHTS strikes a deal with the two children. If they'll free him, he'll help them retrieve their stolen Ideya so they can defeat Wizeman and return balance and order to the world of dreams.



HOW TO PLAY!

Initially, its quite tough to get your head around the way NiGHTS plays, so here's a quick run down on the order of events. Don't worry, it's not as complicated as it seems.

1. CHOOSE YOUR CHARACTER AND DREAM!



After hitting the Start button you enter the 'Diary' screen where you must select both your character and the 'dream' you wish to attempt. The game is divided into eight stages, four for each character, and you'll need to complete the first three levels with at least a 'C' grade in order to gain access to the final dream. Claris's stages are slightly easier – the novice NiGHTS player should start with her.

2. MERGE WITH NiGHTS!

At the start of each 'dream' you take control of your chosen character in a fully realised 3D landscape, with your objective being to follow the on-screen blue arrow to NiGHTS and the Ideya Palace. When you find him, hop into the middle of the prison to merge with NiGHTS and progress to the main section of the game.There is no time limit when you control the kids, though after a while a giant floating alarm clock (representing morning) will appear and chase after you, getting faster and faster. The alarm clock traces the ground with a beam of sunlight, and should the light touch you, its 'Night Over'.





3. FREE THE IDEYA!

Once you've got control of NiGHTS, the game changes as you take to the sky to complete the first course of the level (there are four courses per dream). This involves flying around the landscape collecting the numerous and scattered blue chips, which must then be deposited in the course's floating balloon claw. These claws contain one of the level's four Ideya gems (one per course), and once you've deposited enough chips the structure explodes, releasing the Ideya into NiGHTS' possession. NiGHTS must race against the clock to complete this section, and should the timer run out he will be instantly transported back to his prison leaving the kids to fall to the ground and drop all the collected chips.





4. RETURN THE IDEYA TO THE PRISON

After you've freed the Ideya, NiGHTS must complete the course by returning to the Ideya Palace and delivering the Ideya gem to either Claris or Elliot. Successful completion of the course rewards you with a performance-related grade (either A,B,C,D,E or F) which can be improved by collecting the bonus golden chips on the way back to the prison. Then it's off onto the next course to repeat the procedure.







CRAZY NiGHTS!

While the 3D 'kids' section in NiGHTS is more akin to Mario 64, control of the pseudo 3D NiGHTS section bears more than a passing resemblance to Ecco the Dolphin, with the D-Pad being used to rotate NiGHTS through 360 degrees and the 'action' button to propel him in that direction. NiGHTS leaves behind him a trail of glittering stars, and should he cross his trail (by loop the looping), he creates a vortex inside the space which destroys enemies and sucks in nearby stars and orbs! In order to allow for smoother circles and more precise control, Sega have created a special analogue pad that is being bundled with NiGHTS in Japan, and should make an appearance over here when the game is officially released in September.









GET A-LIFE!

One aspect of NiGHTS that Sega are keen to promote is the revolutionary A-Life system. As you play the game the personality of the Nightopian creatures develops in accordance with way you control Nights, and this information is then saved to memory. For instance, if you kill too many Nightopians they will run and hide from you in fear, whereas if you help them to hatch from their eggs they will be more amicable and fly close to you. The A-Life system also affects the game's music, with new variations on the levels' theme tunes turning up all over the place. This adds a new dimension to the game's lastability as you keep playing just to see how your pet race will develop. Nice touch, eh?



5. BATTLE THE BOSS

When all four Ideyas have been freed, and all four courses successfully completed, NiGHTS is warped to a new area where he must face off against one of the game's many bosses. These encounters involve some of the most imaginative and spectacular scenes ever seen in a video game, with each boss requiring a different attack pattern to exploit its weakness. When the boss is defeated the player is awarded with an overall grade for the level, and its back to the title screen to select the next dream. Simple!



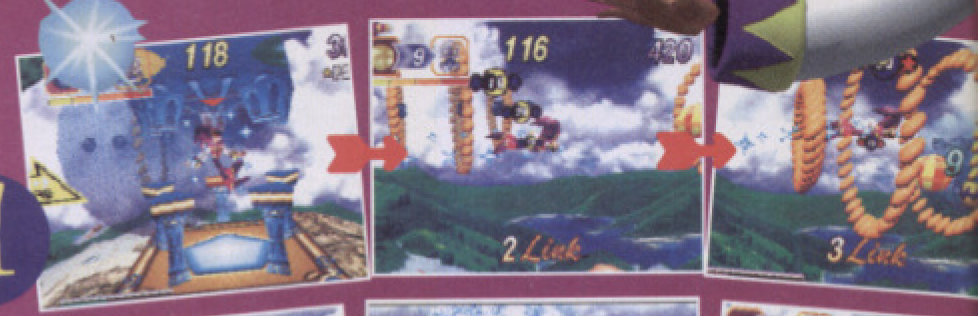
A montage of shots from the incredible boss encounters in NiGHTS. These are some of the most genuinely awesome sequences we've ever seen.



HORSES FOR COURSES

While all of the environments in NiGHTS have been rendered in 3D, your control over NiGHTS is distinctly 2D. NiGHTS moves from left to right and up to down as opposed to into and out of the screen, and all the courses follow a fixed pattern throughout the landscape. These courses are all 'laps' and if you keep travelling right you will eventually end up back at the start. To give you a better idea of how it works, here's a detailed look at Elliot's first dream: Splash Garden.

1

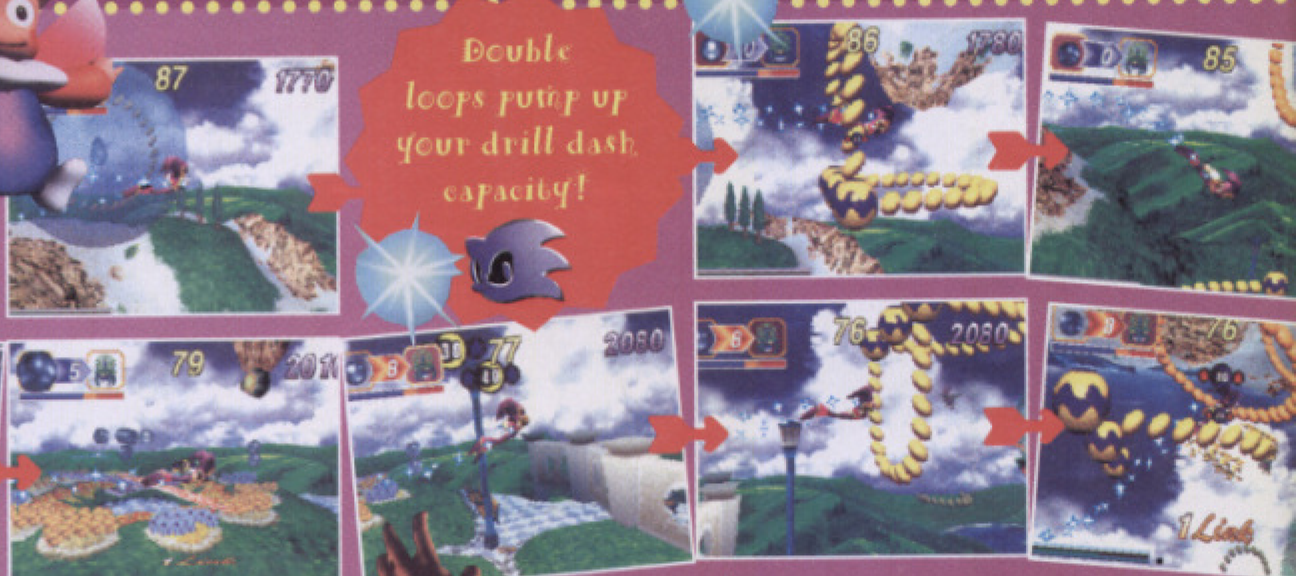




COURSE 2



The second course takes NiGHTS over a park/swiming pool area with street lamps and benches! Hit the brown switches to release a batch of chips into NiGHTS possession. This course offers the oppertunity for HUGE links, so experiment for the best path.



COURSE 3

The third Splash Garden course features one of NiGHTS many perspective changes. As NiGHTS enters the walled garden the game camera changes automatically to a top/down view of the action, allowing NiGHTS to see the giant flower clock on the floor. It keeps real time too!





COURSE 4

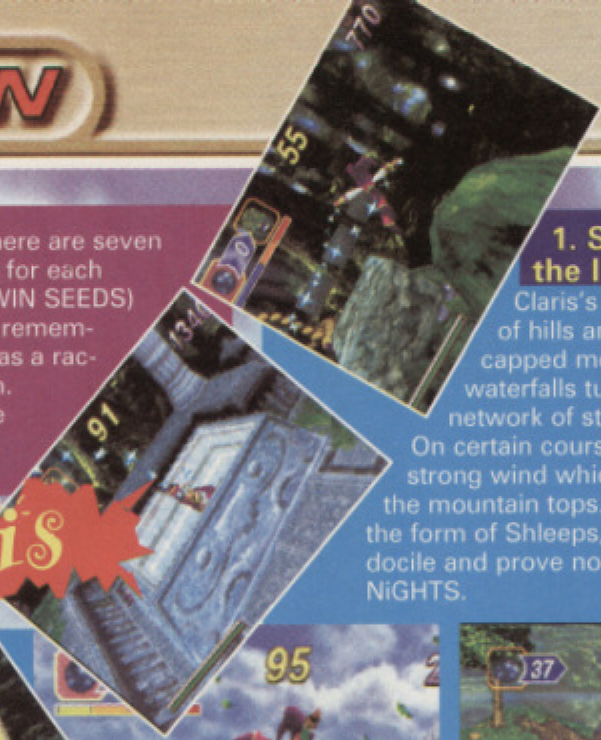
The final course sees another perspective change as NiGHTS swims into the screen inside a huge sunken cavern buried deep within a mountain.




Take your blue chips to the ideya claw!
You need 20 blue chips to free the ideya!

DREAM LINE

As we've already mentioned, there are seven levels in NiGHTS, three dreams for each character and the final level (TWIN SEEDS) which is the same for both. That may not seem like a lot, but you've got to remember that NiGHTS isn't an ordinary action game. In fact, it helps if you see it as a racing sim. These levels have been designed to be played over and over again. Each dream has a number of courses, and rather than trying for a best time you're aiming for a best score. Let's have a look at what's on offer.



1. SPRING VALLEY – the IDEAL-

Claris's first level is a utopia of hills and dales, with snow-capped mountains and roaring waterfalls tumbling down into a network of stream-laden ravines. On certain courses NiGHTS catches a strong wind which propels him up to the mountain tops. Opposition comes in the form of Shleeps, which are fairly docile and prove no match for the agile NiGHTS.

CLARIS

2. MYSTIC FOREST – the POSSIBILITY-

Beneath a dense canopy of trees lies a lush forest bathed in a dense mist. The level has many locations with a mystic feel to them, such as an ancient ruin which hides a hidden entrance to a bonus cave. Watch out for a tricky top/down maze section (look for the car wreck on the ground – you can lead it into the garage!) and a field full of smashable stone slabs.





Follow the brown brick road, don't just jump into NiGHTS' palace!



3. SOFT MUSEUM – the CONFUSION

The ground warps beneath your feet as you enter the topsy-turvey world of Soft Museum. Enter the museum and bounce around on the rubber platforms, or climb into a giant cannon to be blasted 'into' the screen! There are loads of hidden bonuses on this level (try para-looping some of the stars) and some of the graphical effects are stunning.



Soft Museum has a brilliant mirror wall section, where NiGHTS can watch his own moves.





3.STICK CANYON -the REVIVAL-

Elliot's last dream is possibly the toughest in the game. A desert construction stage with plenty of metal girders to obstruct you, Stick Canyon features several special events including a ride on a metal platform and a ray which turns NiGHTS into a living magnet! Watch for the Cuttle and Kicles (we're not making these names up!).

THINGS TO DO IN NIGHTOPIA WHEN YOU'RE NIGHTS

NiGHTS is all about score. At the end of each dream you are presented with a table telling you how well you've done on each course. The key to huge scores in NiGHTS is the LINK system. By passing through consecutive hoops or collecting chips and stars in order, you can build up your link number to astronomical proportions.





ELLIOT



1. SPLASH GARDEN – the AFFECTION-

A hot summer's day in Nightopia and the natives like nothing more than to cool off by the pool side with tall class of Sangria. Supposedly. We've already covered this level in detail, but needless to say expect plenty of aqua-based action for your troubles.



2. FROZEN BELL – the CONSCIOUSNESS-

What would a game be without an 'ice' level? Frozen Bell is a mountainous world covered in snow, most notable for the train that travels around the landscape and the final course where NiGHTS morphs into a Bobsled. Watch out for the chips hidden in the igloos (only Elliot can collect them) and destroy the floating snow balls to release the bonuses contained within.





COMMENT



DAN

Sega have a lot riding on NiGHTS, and they've taken a real risk by producing such a unique game. No lives, not many enemies, and only seven levels to speak of! Thankfully, its a gamble that's paid off. NiGHTS is an incredible experience that combines the speed and simplicity of Sonic with a wealth of subtle gameplay touches. Yes, you'll probably finish it within a few days but that's not the point. NiGHTS is like a racing game. Each of the courses has been carefully fashioned to provide almost unlimited possibilities, and you'll keep coming back just to improve your grade or see how the A-Life system is developing. I love NiGHTS. It looks great, sounds great, plays brilliantly and has more personality than a dozen Marios. What more could you possibly want? Move over Sonic, there's a new kid on the block.

COMMENT



GUS

I don't have to say much, as NiGHTS is one of those rare games that speaks for itself. Frankly, I once wondered if NiGHTS was going to be eye-candy without any hard playability. but it's not only an incredible game, it's a whole new genre of gameplay. For the first time in years I have sore thumbs from constant play.

GRAPHICS — 95

▲Vibrant colours, detailed texture mapping and a superb frame rate create a lush and coherent environment! Amazing!
▼Noticeable build up and occasional glitching.

ANIMATION — 94

▲A new level of excellence is set. The movement of NiGHTS is so fluid it's like water! Brilliant rendered cut scenes too.

MUSIC — 96

▲In a word INCREDIBLE! A mad fusion of jazz, hip hop, break beat, elevator and opera. And it keeps on changing. All using the Saturn's awesome sound chip in realtime.

EFFECTS — 93

▲ Impressive tinkles and bloops, and a nice whooshing sound when NiGHTS performs a Para-Loop.

PLAYABILITY — 96

▲ A revelation! NiGHTS is incredibly intuitive to control and the feeling of flight is unbelievable.

LASTABILITY — 94

▲Like a race game you'll keep playing the courses to improve your grade and discover new links.
▼ Easy to finish and only seven levels

OVERALL

Everybody who owns a Saturn should buy NiGHTS. And if you don't own a Saturn then buy one and get this. You won't regret it.

96

NBA ACTION

BY	SEGA
RELEASE	AUGUST
PRICE	£44.99
GAME TYPE	BASKETBALL
PLAYERS	1-8

BREAK DOWN

ORIGINALITY

CHALLENGE

ACTION

STRATEGY

REFLEXES

OPTIONS

CONTROL
JOYPAD (MUTI-TAP)

GAME DIFFICULTY
AVERAGE

CONTINUES
RAM SAVE

SKILL LEVELS
3

RESPONSIVENESS
GOOD

ORIGIN

Sega produce another 'virtual' sports experience for Catholic-sized family entertainment.

GAME AIM

Place the ball through your opponents' hoop, as stylishly as possible!

BEAT THIS

86-70, Jazz vs Lakers

It looks like Sega are finally getting their act together on the Saturn sports front. Not such a big deal here, but in America the battle last Christmas was a matter of who had the best football game. Sony won that one, but if Sega continue to put forward simulations of the quality of NBA Action, the tide must surely turn.

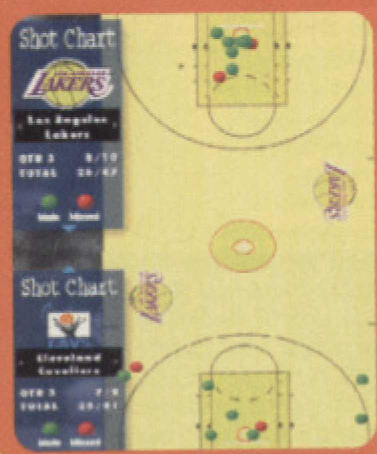


It's a console sports game of the old school: lots of stats, pretend sports TV styling, enough options to fill the comfortable interior of a Lincoln town car and, of course, the old instant replay. But while it has all the superficial features of, for example, NFL Hockey, there's a little more panache.



I AM NOT A NUMBER

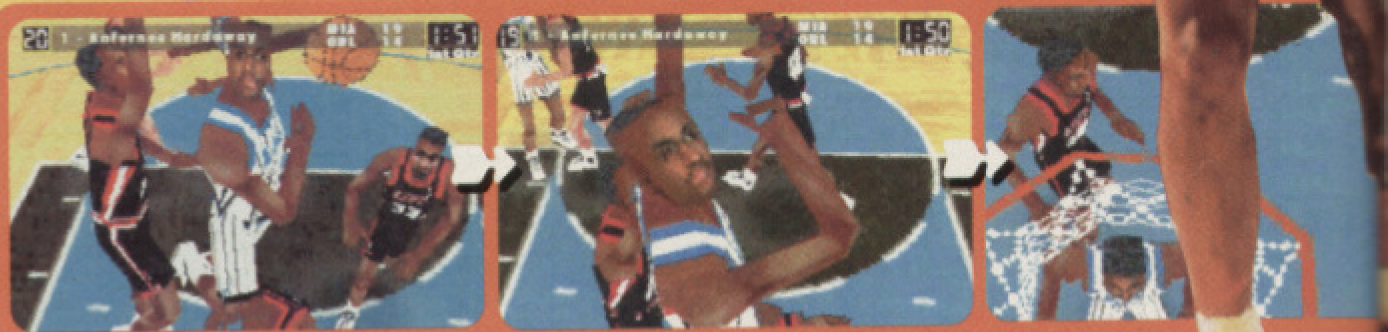
You are if you're part of NBA Action. Every minute detail (that's decent) is listed, and as you take the players through a season, the System file updates your progress. One nice original feature within the game is a map of the court showing where your attempts have been made from.



MASSED RANKS

Like NFL Hockey before it, NBA Action supports a massive amount of players — two full human teams if you have the two multi-taps and that number of joypads.



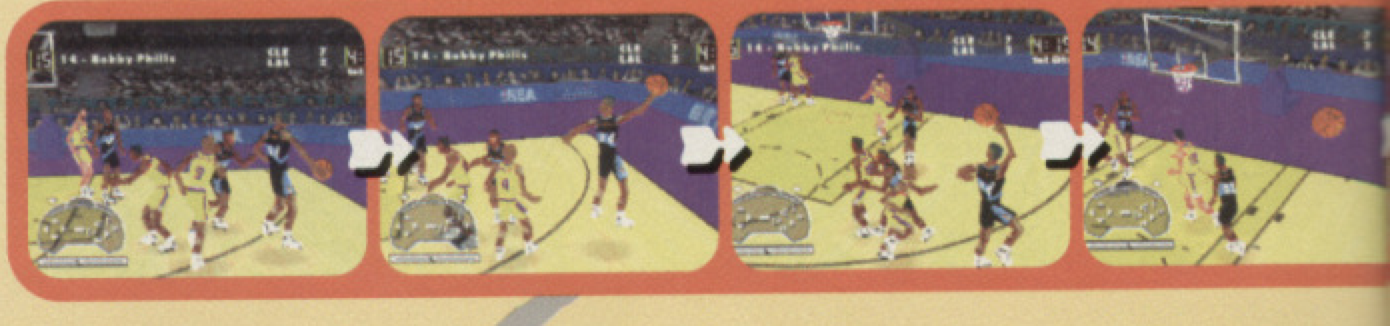


ICE ON TAPE

Cool moves in at the basket, when your player dunks the ball with particular class, are rewarded by a short 'gamebite' replay from a sharp camera angle. It's worth getting good, just for these.









NBA ACTION





Players' texture-mapped faces remain convincing – even in close up.



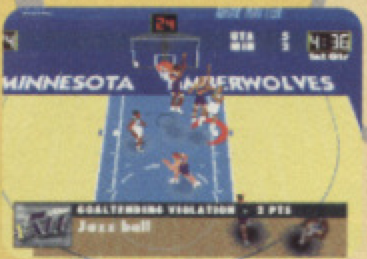
Check out those pert basketball bums with the 'botty cam' function. Probably.

POLY PLAY

The game plays on a fast-moving polygon court, with players also constructed from those fascinating little shapes. Control is generally easier than 3-D games of this type, and there's a range of sensible camera angles.



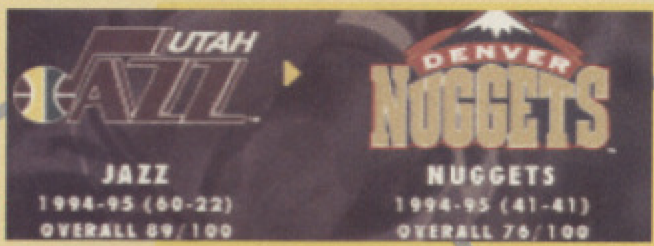
Relive that NEC experience by viewing the action from the cheap seats...



...then go for the 'live television coverage' angle...



...before dangling from the back of one of the hoops.



COMMENT



MARCUS

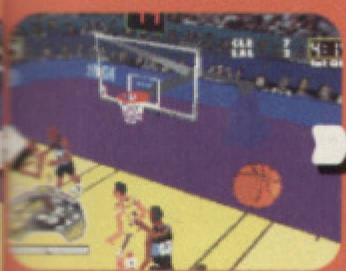
I always prefer the more authentic simulation to the shallow knockabout disguised as basketball, football or whatever. As is the case with my favourite footie game, Olympic Soccer, this isn't the best looking game of its type. But give it time and you'll discover the depth and playability missing from Slam and Jam.

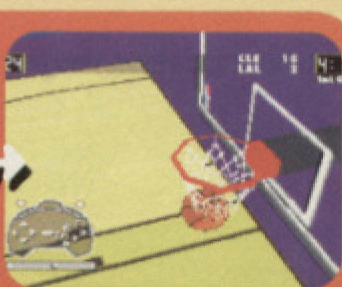
COMMENT



GUS

I got basketball fatigue long ago, but can say that Sega have made it about as playable and rewarding as a game with two shopping bags strung to clothespoles can be. The graphics are pretty good, in fact they grow on you, seeming slightly dull at first. The controls are sensible, sitting the game between an action sports game and a simulation with rather more depth. The stats and replays are competent and NBA Action has altogether more going for it than Slam and Jam or the ageing NBA Jam.



GRAPHICS 86

▲Polygon players with authentic texture-mapped facials. Good stadium environment and camera angles.

ANIMATION 85

▲Super smooth camera movement – none of that shimmering – and cool moves all round.

MUSIC 79

▲Trip hopping when you score neatly.
▼Few 'beats' the rest of the time.

EFFECTS 80

▲A commentary of the obvious and squeaky floor tiles.
▼Crowd could do with some Prozac.

PLAYABILITY 88

▲ Good range of moves to learn, and it's easy to play at all levels.

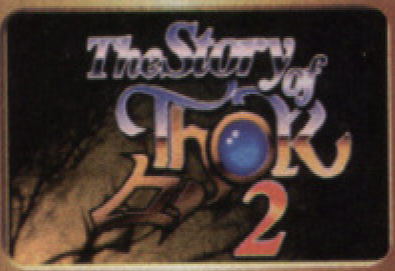
LASTABILITY 85

▲ If you're into the game, NBA Action offers as much depth as any comparable product.

OVERALL

An all-round good egg, with a higher level of graphical presentation than we're used to. The basketball game of the moment.

88



BY: SEGA

RELEASE: SEPTEMBER

PRICE: TBA

GAME TYPE: ARCADE/ADVENTURE

BREAK DOWN

1 PLAYERS

ORIGINALITY

CHALLENGE

ACTION

STRATEGY

REFLEXES

OPTIONS

CONTROL
JOYPAD

GAME DIFFICULTY
MEDIUM

CONTINUES
RAM SAVE

SKILL LEVELS
1

RESPONSIVENESS
GOOD

ORIGIN

Programmed by Ancient, producers of the smash Megadrive RPG. This carries on where Story of Thor left off.

GAME AIM

Explore the plan-view locations of Oasis, find the spirits, solve the riddles.

BEAT THIS

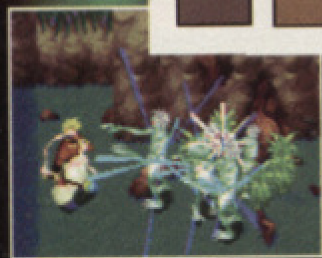
Locate Efreet

Leon returns to his small village in Oasis after many adventures, hoping to settle down to a quiet life, produce little Thors and probably die of the plague sometime in the distant future. But it was not to be!

Village Chief Ordan has located an ancient golden amulet from the bottom of a deep lake, an artefact from primordial times that holds immense power. But as Ordan examines the instrument of potential good, he realises another amulet, forged from silver, has been repossessed by an ancient evil, Agito.
Ordan commisions Leon to seize the silver amulet, using the power of the golden one and the assistance of six elemental spirits with unique abilities, trapped in tombs of antiquity.











VILLAGE PEOPLE

Thor's adventure begins and returns in his home village. Ordan sends him out on various quests, and guidance is always available. As the plot develops, the adventure takes Thor further from his home and into greater danger.



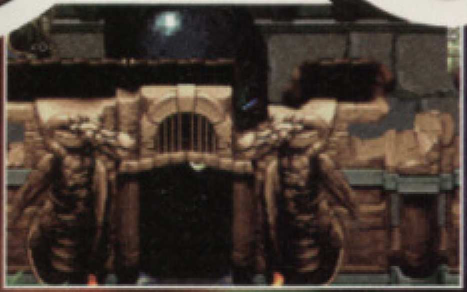




Thor starts off by trotting around the safe environs of his village, as people drop left right and centre with a mysterious pox. Return here when you find something of interest.









MAN AT ARMS

Thor has mastered all kinds of fighting disciplines but he lacks all the gear. If you find weapons in addition to your short sword, there are all manner of special attacks available through joypad combinations. Experiment, or consult the many technique obelisks that litter the landscape. The game's rules are literally written in stone.

SHORT SWORD

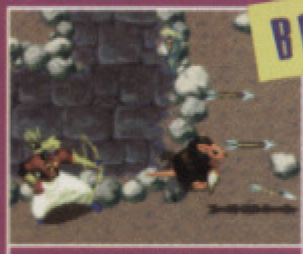


RUNNING STAB



CIRCLE SLASH

BOW



MULTIPLE ARROW



HIGH ARROW

ROD



JUMPING ATTACK



LUNGE ATTACK

LONG SWORD



SKULL BREAKER



ROLL ATTACK

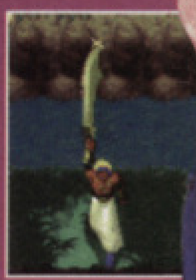


CIRCLE STRIKE

LOST REALMS

The look and feel of Saturn Story of Thor is similar to Megadrive Legend of Thor, but the game is less linear, the palaces more labyrinthine, and a greater degree of the game is puzzle solving. Leon spends as much time searching for keys and tripping switches as fighting. Obelisks of knowledge, offering hints, go some way to easing the player through the game.













SPIRITUS SANCTUS

Leon is incapable of tackling the Forces of Evil alone. He must first search out the six spirits hiding in the earth of Oasis. These are are difficult to find and jealously guarded by a major denizen. Once a spirit is claimed, Leon can summon it by firing his amulet power at a summoning element. As an example, Dytto the Water Spirit will appear whenever water is used. A spirit will flank Leon as long as he possesses magical power, but this is drained constantly by the spirit's actions. Using the Spirits wisely is central to gameplay. Here are the first three:

BAWUU EARTH SPIRIT

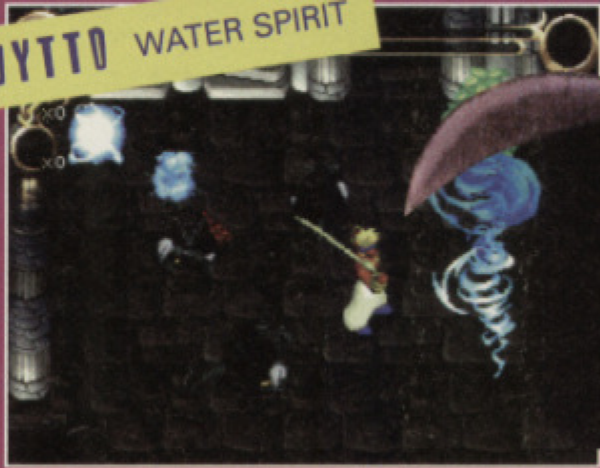




Looks like the man-eating star of Little Shop of Horrors, Bawu is the little plant with (supposedly) the big personality. He can gulp up enemies or launch a swarm of deadly homing buds.



DYTTO WATER SPIRIT



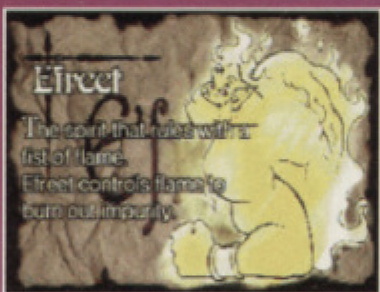




Dytto is a delicate faerie, but highly versatile. She can freeze most foes, and also water spouts to create solid pinnacles. She also has the power to heal Leon.

EFREET FIRE SPIRIT





Efreet is summoned from any flame. His powers are all destructive, with fiery breath, torpedo and a flaming attack to engulf a horde of enemies. His powers can also be more subtly employed — to remove obstacles and reveal items from trees.





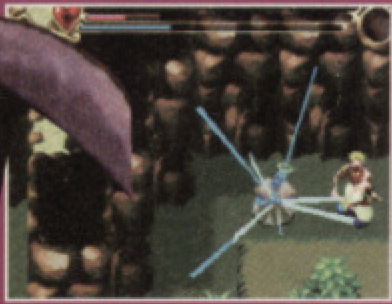






FREE THE SPIRIT

Magical scrolls are another dimension to the gameplay. These work in conjunction with your weapons and also orbs of energy, which are dotted around the landscape. The most useful artefact is the Rod of Purification, which turns buds into springy plants (jumpgrass) and quite separately releases the tortured spirits of undead zombies and ghouls.




WACKY WEEDS

Leon comes across a veritable spice rack of fresh herbs which, when ingested, have various effects. How these are helpful is not always easily apparent, but it's worth experimenting with Mighty Mint, Eye Bright, Tiny Thyme and Super Pepper, amongst others.





COMMENT

DAN

There aren't a great deal of action/RPG's on the Saturn, and as such Story of Thor 2 fills a much needed gap. I loved Thor on the Megadrive, and its good to see that Sega have found time to release this in amongst all their AAA 3D blockbusters. Combining an intuitive combat sytem with some clever puzzles and a strong storyline, Story of Thor 2 should appeal to all those Saturn RPG fans who have been feeling a left out recently. Though initially it seems a bit linear, Thor 2 does get better the more you play it, both graphically and in terms of the game variety. Nice music too.

COMMENT

GUS

Story of Thor was one of the best all-round Megadrive games, and appears to have been a dry run for Saturn Thor, which improves on it in every way. The familiar character control and overhead perspective remain, which might make it look a bit samey. However, as you progress the quality and variety of graphics impresses, even by 32-bit standards. But Ancient's main occupation has been to beef up the RPG elements of Thor, and make gameplay less dependent on fighting. It works well, with all manner of secrets and skills to uncover. You only start to appreciate the action once the first couple of levels are dispensed with (which explains why the import version was rather poorly received). But devotees of the original should be pleased, and newcomers should quickly become converts.

GRAPHICS 89

▲Lush backgrounds, detailed cartoon enemies and atmospheric presentation.

▼The expanded sprites sometimes used look horrible.

ANIMATION 86

▲Leon is nicely animated like a comic-book hero should be. And so are many of his opponents.

▼Few genuine 'next gen' FX.

MUSIC 87

▲A departure in game music, with Yuzo Koshiro providing a cinematic score, rather than tunes.

▼More ambient than memorable.

EFFECTS 90

▲Great, with wailing zombies and roaring waterfalls, all depth-cued. Thor's soundscapes set the scene

▼Shades of Dark Castle...

PLAYABILITY 90

▲A true arcade adventure, with a good balance between action and puzzle gameplay.

▼The pace of play is quite sedate.

LASTABILITY 86

▲More complex and challenging than the Megadrive game.

▼The game is pretty forgiving, and not too challenging.

OVERALL

Another good RPG to add to the Saturn's strong line-up. Thor offers you its weight in gameplay.

89



BY: ELECTRONIC ARTS

RELEASE: AUGUST

PRICE: £44.99

GAME TYPE: RACING

BREAK DOWN

1 PLAYERS

ORIGINALITY

OPTIONS

CONTROL
JOYPAD

GAME
DIFFICULTY
EASY

CONTINUES
SAVE GAME

SKILL LEVELS
1

RESPONSIVENESS
OK

CHALLENGE

ORIGIN

The road rage saga of Road Rash continues – the Megadrive classic appears on Saturn.

ACTION

STRATEGY

GAME AIM

Improve your bike by winning prize money racing across California. Achieve victory by fair means or foul...

REFLEXES

BEAT THIS

First on Pacific Highway

ROAD R

Before the phrase 'road rage' became part of the nation's vocabulary, Megadrive owners were cheerily knocking each other off motorbikes using bicycle chains and clubs. The carnage inflicted across the original three instalments of Road Rash went largely unnoticed by the media.

Now that road rage is a worrying motorway epidemic, Road Rash has made a comeback. The 32-bit version of this high-speed motorcycle carnage originally appeared on 3DO. Megadrive fans will know the score – tear along the highways of California, avoiding cars, pedestrians and other competitors in order to come first. Alternately, you can tear along the highways of California, pranging cars with spectacular results, squashing pedestrians and knocking opponents off their motorbikes. The choice is yours. 32-bit Road Rash has had a bit of a makeover – the game now comes bejewelled with a load of Dukes of Hazzard-style FMV, and the tunes are provided by a load of long-haired grebos that the teenagers among you may have heard of.

THE CITY – 8.5km

The obstacles in this suburban course include the yellow taxis that litter the road, and the jaywalking pedestrians who inevitably get under your wheels. Try to avoid them all by mounting the pavement – but watch out for the lampposts!





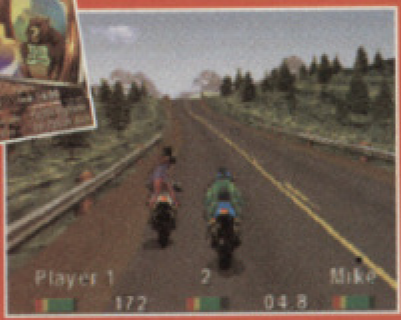


SIERRA NEVADA – 8.5km

Old timberland country with few trees or buildings to interrupt the skyline. Be careful not to stray off the road – the predominance of crash barriers make it difficult to get back on.A fairly deserted town area in the middle of the course provides variety.

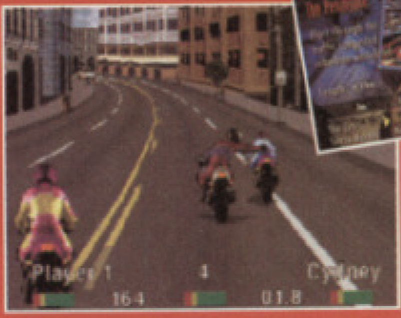






THE PENINSULA – 8.5km

Mediterranean architecture lends this course a more relaxed feel. Well, it's fairly relaxed until someone comes up behind you and tries to club you off your bike. The city streets soon broaden out into forked country roads – choose your path.

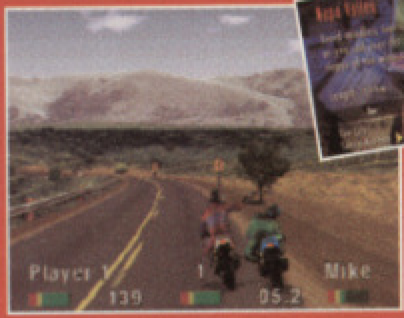




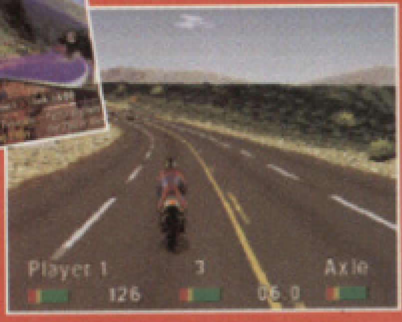


NAPA VALLEY – 8.0km

The open fields and wide roads of wine country are punctuated by farm machinery, busy junctions (watch out for crosstown traffic) and forked roads. The side of the road is muddy – stray off course and you'll lose speed before you get back on.

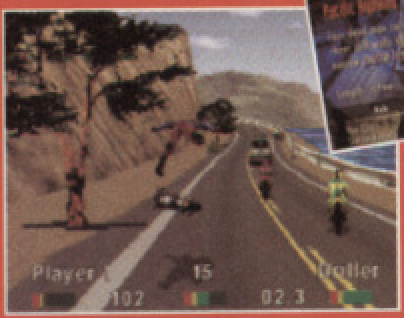






PACIFIC HIGHWAY – 8.8km

Dead man curves, tight two-lane roads, tunnels and sheer cliff walls are all features of the most impressive and most demanding course. Clashes with opponents are inevitable if you're going to steal pole position.









BIG GAME MODE



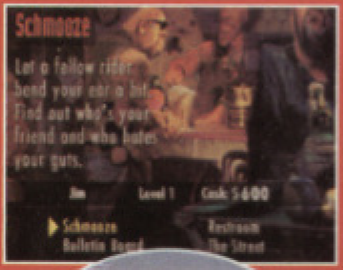
If you want more depth than burning down the highway murdering innocent opponents offers you, then select Big Game Mode. You'll have to choose a character and begin competing with the other characters starting out with a low-powered bike and a limited amount of cash. The more races you win, the more cash you'll receive and the better the bikes you'll be able to afford. You'll progress through various levels the better you ride. You schmooze with your fellow bikers at 'Der Panzer Klub', which is also where you'll book yourself into races by looking at the bulletin board. At 'Olley's Skoot-a-Rama' you'll be able to spend your ill-gotten gains on a new silver dream machine – or you'll get shown the door if you're too skint!





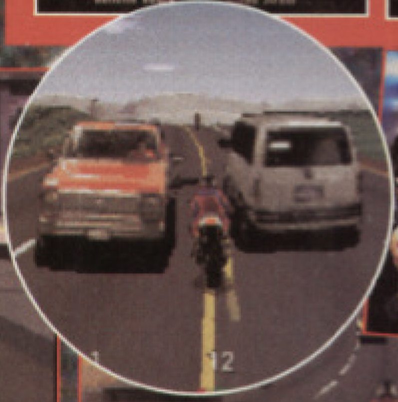


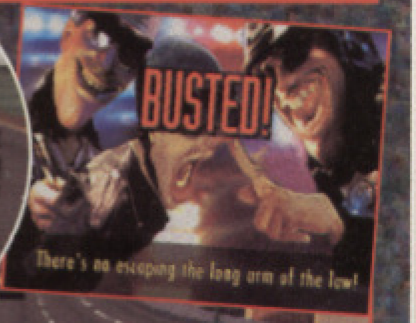












There's no escaping the long arm of the law!



COMMENT



MARCUS

I used to think Road Rash was pretty cool on the Megadrive. The novel premise has survived into the Saturn version but that's pretty much it. What had the potential to be a great game has been saddled with uninspiring scenarios, poor sprites, disappointing animation, inappropriate music and the most loathsome FMV I've ever seen. Nearly every mistake possible has been made and, incredibly, the whole affair seems less impressive than the original 3DO version. If you're desperate to go biking on your Saturn then your possibilities are admittedly limited (Hang On GP isn't great either – it's just bad in different ways) but I really would recommend waiting for Manx TT.

COMMENT



GUS

Two years ago, we saw Road Rash on the 3DO and we wanted it. Ah, we were young and impressionable. Since then, everything from Wipeout to Sega Rally has outperformed this earliest of next generation racers. Graphically, there is a crudeness that the speed of the scenery doesn't quite dispel, and the long layouts don't offer the subtleties that bring you back to practice them time and again. The best argument for not buying Road Rash comes from EA themselves, who are releasing the excellent Need for Speed around the same time. Unless you have to be on two wheels, I'd go for that.

GRAPHICS 71

▼Scenarios are samey and uneventful. The caricatures and visual look seem inappropriate. The FMV is extremely annoying.

ANIMATION 70

▼This isn't sophisticated enough to handle the action demanded of the small sprites.

MUSIC 83

▲The soundtrack includes music by Therapy?, Swervedriver and Soundgarden...

▼...It doesn't always suit the visuals.

EFFECTS 76

▲The bike noises and thumping sounds are OK.

▼Everything could have been a bit beefier.

PLAYABILITY 82

▲Easy to get into and quite fun to play while you discover each course.

▼There's not enough variety, and no two player mode.

LASTABILITY 73

▲You can play the game in 'arcade' mode or as a tournament where you ride to win cash and improve your bike.

▼The five courses you ride across the levels are all pretty samey.

OVERALL

A great idea has been turned into an unremarkable game, leaden with unwelcome garnish.

77

BUGS IN DOUBL[E TROUBLE]



BY: SEGA

RELEASE: SEPTEMBER

PRICE: £39.99

GAME TYPE: PLATFORM

1 PLAYERS

16 MEG

BREAK DOWN: ORIGINALITY, CHALLENGE, ACTION, STRATEGY, REFLEXES

OPTIONS

CONTROL
JOYPAD

GAME DIFFICULTY
AVERAGE

CONTINUES
3

SKILL LEVELS
3

RESPONSIVENESS
OK

ORIGIN

All your Warner Brothers faves in a Megadrive title aimed at kiddies and cartoon buffs.

GAME AIM

Escape the clutches of Yosemite Sam, Elmer Fudd, Daffy etc by running, jumping and shooting carrots.

BEAT THIS

Spaced Out Bunny Stage 3

In years gone by, when folks visited their local cinema they could munch their popcorn in the darkness, safe in the knowledge that even if the film was cobblers, the preceding cartoon would be a corker. These days, you're lucky if you get the chance to laugh at the advert of the woman licking the hot dog and a singalong to the Pearl & Dean theme.

Thanks to TV, however, the exploits of Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Marvin the Martian, Road Runner and Porky Pig live on. And thanks to Uncle Sega, your Warner Brothers faves have got their own game. True to the current vogue for multi-style games (bit of platform stuff, a bit of shoot 'em up stuff, a bit of, erm, flying through asteroids-type stuff) Bugs Bunny in Double Trouble is a pick 'n' mix affair. The plot sees mad Professor Yosemite Sam develop a robot that requires a brain to function. A rabbit's brain. As the game gets more and more bizarre, the beleaguered Bugs can at least console himself that it's all a dream. Or is it...?

DUCK RABBIT DUCK

Lure Daffy to chase you, running past the rabbit season signs. As he runs past each one, it flips to show a duck instead of a rabbit. Get Daffy to unwittingly flip each one and Elmer Fudd will think it's duck season, not rabbit season, when he starts hunting at the end of the three levels. Oh, and mind the caterpillar!





BULLY FOR BUGS

Catch the floating sticks of dynamite, and use them to blast your way under the bull ring on your descent. When you're underground, look for the glue, sandpaper and TNT you'll need to sort out the Spanish bull when you're back on the surface.



HARE-ABIAN NIGHTS

Flying carpets, flying carrots and flying rabbits are a common sight in this level. You're looking for the genie inside the three lamps belonging to Vizier Yosemite Sam. Don't forget to use your clockwork homing carrots and time bomb carrots. Watch out for certain patches of ground – that stuff isn't pizza topping, it's burning coals!

MAD AS A MARS HARE

In this level, Bugs gets a tiny flying saucer and skims the craggy surface of Mars, searching for the Aludium Q36 explosive. As if Marvin and K9 weren't enough, you'll also have to keep an eye out for falling stalactites.

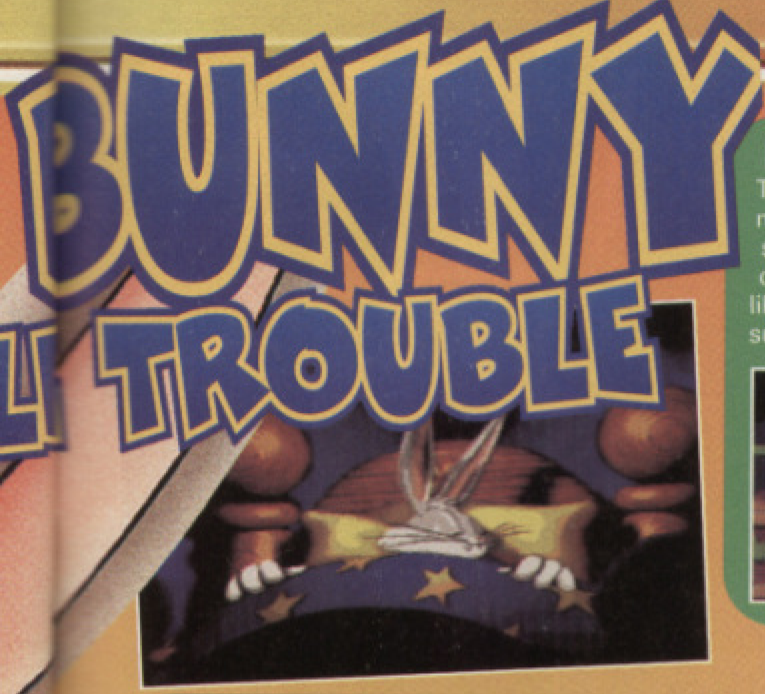


SPACED OUT BUNNY

You're making your way to Mars on a putting space scooter. As you near the planet, dodge the brown asteroids and demolish the white asteroids for special power-ups. Collect the floating fuel tanks to keep going. Later on, Marvin the Martian will try to knock you off course.



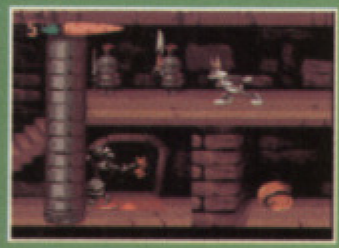




KNIGHTY KNIGHT BUGS

This level is played out under and on top of the battlements of the Black Knight's castle. Remember to grab the sword in the stone – this gives you the power to slay the dragon and knock out the knight (who looks suspiciously like Yosemite Sam). Perils on the way include haunted suits of armour and a bunny girl who isn't all she seems...





HAREWAY TO THE STARS





This final level sees you take on Marvin and his defence forces while locating four interplanetary lasers – switch them from pointing at Earth to Mars to complete the game and wake up!

HAUNTED HARE

You're looking for the Professor's dungeon laboratory – go through the library (flying books will swiftly transport you between levels) remembering to collect the door keys on the way. Inside the laboratory, use the Professor's bizarre creations to defeat Gossamer...















COMMENT



GUS

There are already some excellent comedy cartoon platformers available for the Megadrive and Bugs Bunny has some stiff competition. While it passes the graphics test with flying colours, I'd have liked to have seen a different emphasis to the gameplay – a few more Spaced Out Bunny-type levels and a few less Haunted Hare-type runarounds wouldn't have gone amiss. But overall there's a lot of game for your money, and younger players shouldn't find any of it too challenging.

COMMENT



MARCUS

I've always loved the Warner Brothers cartoons and I knew how much work had gone into making sure everything in this game reflected those classics exactly. I got a lot of fun out of spotting gags and scenarios that have been expertly ripped off. But what about the game?
There's plenty of it, and it's solid stuff. Only a couple of levels present gameplay innovations I've never come across before – some of the rest seems to owe a debt to Earthworm Jim 2, although it never quite scales those dizzy gameplay heights. Overall this is well balanced, highly polished and good for a chuckle. Looney Tunes fans would be unwise to ignore.

GRAPHICS — 84

▲Bold, cheeky and stylised – captures the characters well.
▼The scenarios aren't as detailed.

ANIMATION — 81

▲It's all here – characters look determined, desperate, anxious, bored and cheeky. Again, the cartoons are reflected well.

MUSIC — 72

▼The Looney Tunes theme is represented as well as can be expected under the circumstances. Which isn't very well.

EFFECTS — 79

▲Loads of comedy stuff inspired by the cartoons.

PLAYABILITY — 85

▲Enough variety to suit most tastes.
▼There should have been greater empahasis on the more innovative levels.

LASTABILITY — 82

▲There's a bonus level and different playing routes.
▼You won't want to go back to the problem-solving levels.

OVERALL

Solid gameplay, good variety, sophisticated use of license. That'll do for us, folks.

84



BY THQ

RELEASE AUGUST

PRICE TBA

GAME TYPE MULTI SPORTS

1-8 PLAYERS

16 MEG

BREAK DOWN

ORIGINALITY

CHALLENGE

ACTION

STRATEGY

REFLEXES

OPTIONS

CONTROL
JOYPAD

GAME DIFFICULTY
MEDIUM

CONTINUES
NONE

SKILL LEVELS
3

RESPONSIVENESS
OKAY

ORIGIN

It's a classic multi-sports sim of the Track and Field school, with an isometric graphic twist.

GAME AIM

Outperform all other opponents in ten event disciplines.

BEAT THIS

3 golds, 2 silvers.

OLYMPIC SUMMER GAMES

While all the attention has gone on US Gold's Saturn effort for the Olympic Games, THQ's developer has been beavering away on a Megadrive sports simulation. And since the vogue seems to be with isometric perspectives (Whizz, Sonic 3-D) there's a 45-degree slant to the 10 events on offer.

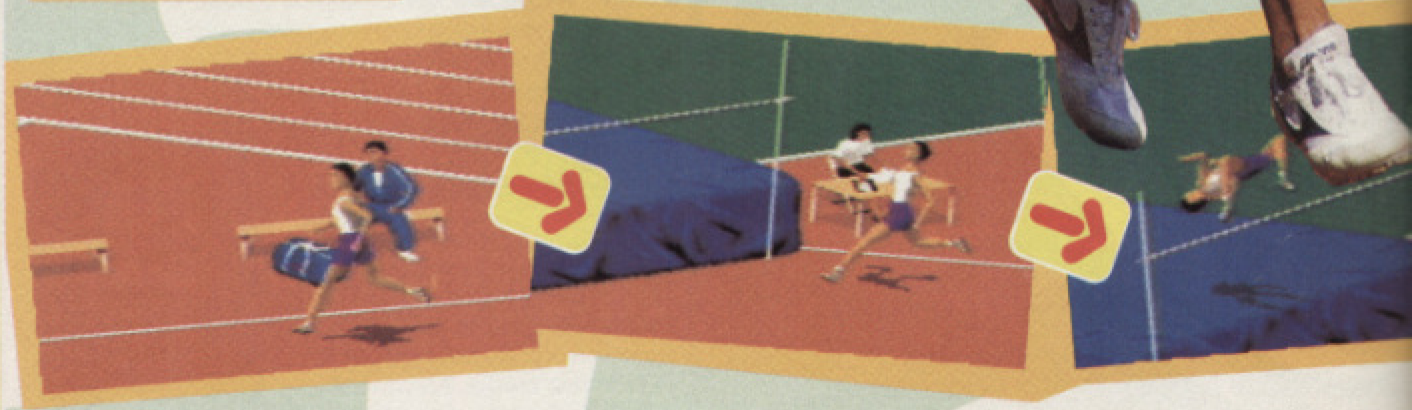
Much play in the office has led this to be dubbed affectionately, 'School Sports Simulator '96', bringing back memories of carrying the desks out to the playing fields, plastic medals and the class asthmatic having an attack in the middle of the three-legged final.



TIP TAP

Gameplay for Olympic Games is the not-so-original button-bashing method favoured by games of the genre. It's not so much frantic bashing, as steady rhythym that gets the best effect. It's also more difficult to judge the right moment to release as no angle diagrams for throwing or jumping are shown.





CHARIOTS OF FIRE

The chance to excel in 10 events, either as one big competition or a custom-made Olympics of your choice. Let's look at the line-up:

100M DASH

110M HURDLES

LONG JUMP

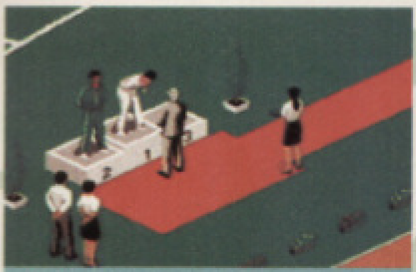
HIGH JUMP

POLE VAULT

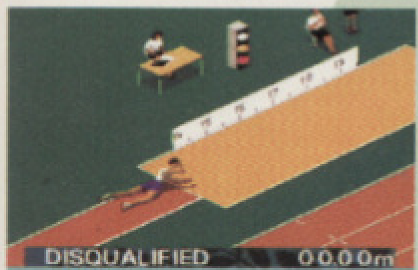


CLASS OF '96

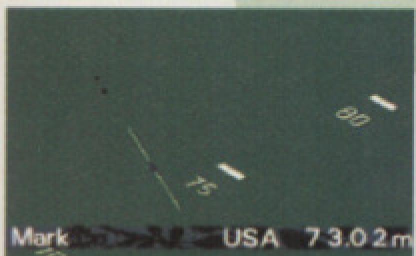
How we love the spectators, judges and pot plants that add such character to School Sports...sorry Olympic Games. Watch out for the paper-shuffling women at the Discus and the classic 'Men standing with Poles'.



"And for outstanding merit in the potted shrub section, the winner is..."



You'd have thought they'd help him – he's been crawling hours to get this far.



OK, Claire, no problem – I could caption anything. Right, erm, hmmm...



The newsreader in the middle's our fave.

COMMENT



GUS

If Skelmersdale was ever to host the Olympics, this is what they would look like. THQ's Megadrive game has some tittersome graphics, but if you don't take it all too seriously they add to the charm. Gameplay-wise there is one major failing — the presence of any angle bar allowing you to judge your throws or jumps properly. Also, some events are piss-easy (High Jump) while others, surprisingly the running, require an Olympian effort. But we all had good fun — up to eight can play from a single joypad, and the archery is cool. One to enjoy with a cup of orange squash and a McVittie's homewheat.

COMMENT



MARCUS

Curious mix of difficulty here – some of the events are so simple that you're wondering whether you could possibly get any better after only a few goes. Other events require a technique that continues to elude me after numerous attempts. But if you get frustrated you can always pass the time by mocking the invigilators – the man with the centre-parting and the moustache is highly amusing, as is the Jan Leeming type who insists on shuffling her papers every few minutes. My favourite event is the archery – we'd never seen anything quite like it before.



Olympic Records

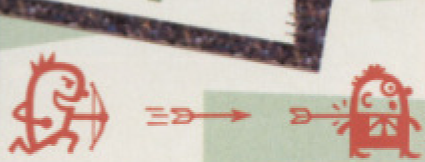
100m	C.Lewis	9.92s
110m Hurdles	R.Kingdom	12.98s
Pole Vault	S.Bubka	5.90m
Triple Jump	M.Conley	17.63m
Long Jump	B.Beamon	8.90m
High Jump	G.Avdeenko	2.38m
Javelin	J.Zelezny	89.66m
Discus	Mark	71.78m
Archery	J.Barrs	338pts
Skeet	S.Zhang	200pts

See World Records
RETURN TO MAIN





The archery sequence is bizarre, but good fun. Draw the bow back (your aim falters as your muscles strain to hold it taut) and carefully time the release of your arrow. Smart.



TRIPLE JUMP | DISCUS | JAVELIN | SKEET SHOOT | ARCHERY



GRAPHICS 72
▲ An isometric slant has been introduced for most events, and the archery looks good.
▼ Looks dated.

ANIMATION 75
▲ For many of the events the animation is fluid and detailed, and the little background bits keep you chortling.

MUSIC 62
▼ Horrible, and thankfully in short supply.

EFFECTS 58
▼ Not evocative of a great stadium atmosphere.

PLAYABILITY 77
▲ Most of the events are easy enough to handle. The multi-player option works okay.
▼ A bit long-winded in structure.

LASTABILITY 74
▲ Reasonable fun in a group. Record-breaking offers long-term play potential.
▼ Seen it all before.

OVERALL
Enjoyable after a fashion, but with none of the glitz we expect from the Greatest Show on Earth.

76



BY: INFOGRAMES

RELEASE: OUT NOW

PRICE: TBA

GAME TYPE: ADVENTURE

1 PLAYERS

16 MEG

BREAK DOWN

ORIGINALITY

CHALLENGE

ACTION

STRATEGY

REFLEXES

OPTIONS

CONTROL
JOYPAD

GAME DIFFICULTY
MEDIUM

CONTINUES
PASSWORD

SKILL LEVELS
3

RESPONSIVENESS
ADEQUATE

ORIGIN

The Tin TIn characters come from the classic comic strips and cartoons of Herge. This game stays faithful to one book: Tin Tin in Tibet.

GAME AIM

Locate Tin Tin's missing friend Tchang, lost in a plane crash in the Himalayas.

BEAT THIS

20% complete

Tint in Ti

Tin Tin is still massively popular over here despite being Belgian and ancient. Black bushy beards and little white dogs never go out of fashion, though the craze for Tin Tin style haircuts is mercifully dead.

When it came to comic art, Herge had a particular kind of skill, and both the Tin Tin books and TV show continue to outperform modern whipper-snapper cartoon fare. Infogrames, software champion of all things Français, have taken one particular graphic adventure, Tin Tin in Tibet, spent a couple of years getting everything authentic and now unleash a veritable 16-bit interactive cartoon.





HOLY CRAMPONS!

When Tin Tin actually gets going in the mountains (about a third into the game) you can start fiddling with his climbing gear! His ice-pick allows you to scale the towering cliffs of the Himalayas.



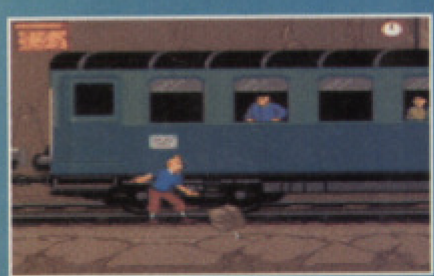
Aware of the strange gravitational forces in the Himalayas, and miles from the nearest portaloo, Captain Haddock decides to have a quick slash while Tin Tin's back is turned. The consequences for our young hero are disastrous.





CHAPTER AND VERSE

Each section of the game follows a section of the Tin Tin in Tibet book, linked by little story boxes. In each level, Tin Tin has a specific objective, like saving Tchang from the river, or finding the Sherpa's shop.



YANGTZE TRAIN TRIP

Tin TIn dodges the baggage and saves a drowning Chinaman.



HOTEL

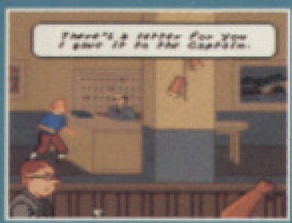
Tin Tin seeks out the concierge, then sees something terrible on television.



KATHMANDU

The team interrogate the market traders looking for the right Sherpa.









STEP OUT



"I'll tell you what the matter is mate – your hairstyle went out when Bronski Beat split up."

The game's most original feature is the use of the foreground as an extra plane for gameplay. In most areas, Tin Tin can run forward to avoid the dubious activities of others. Sadly, he usually has to return to the background to move on, so the use of this feature is rather limited.

COMMENT



MARCUS

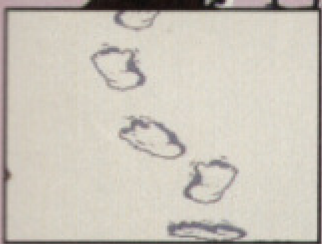
This is a cracking piece of Tin Tin merchandise that will doubtless be lapped up by fans of Jimmy Somerville's style guru. It's rare to see a licensed piece of software that adheres so carefully to its source, and Infogrames have clearly done Hergé's work proud. For this reason, the game will probably be very popular with those willing to persevere with it that little bit longer. It's far from perfect, however, and its appeal to the curious gamesplayer without a special interest in Belgium's youngest private detective may well be limited. Verdict – interesting, in a 'nice to have' kinda way.

COMMENT



GUS

If you're into Tin Tin, you'll be impressed with how close to the visual spirit of the cartoons Infogrames have come with this game. All the input from the Hergé company has been of huge benefit to the game's look. The designers have also tried to be innovative with the gameplay, bringing Tin Tin and his chums in and out of the background. Trouble is, this effect quickly reveals itself to be gimmicky and overused. The actual gameplay, roving the left-right levels from point to point, becomes repetitive. In spite of its production values, Tin Tin in Tibet doesn't really work well as a game.







FOOTHILLS

Tin Tin's first taste of climbing. Rockfalls and Tibetan cows are the hazards.





A novel aspect of the game is your ability to move Tin Tin in and out of the foregroud – avoid the bull here by scaling the steps and going through the market.

GRAPHICS 86

▲The spirit of the comic strip caught perfectly. Lots of graphic variation.

ANIMATION 80

▲Tin Tin moves pretty well.
▼The animation on the game's 'enemies' is limited.

MUSIC 10

▼Nothing to write home about.

EFFECTS 71

▼Mediocre effects fail to inspire.

PLAYABILITY 72

▲The novelty value of playing a cartoon character in an adventure is high.
▼Gameplay is slow-moving.

LASTABILITY 65

▲Some head-scratching is involved with the level objectives.
▼Once completed, you won't return.

OVERALL

Tin Tin fans may well be thrilled, but the Tibetan jaunt is a little too sedate for us to enthuse over.

70

Atlanta 1996

BY: US GOLD

RELEASE: AUGUST

PRICE: £44.99

GAME TYPE: MULTI-SPORTS

BREAK DOWN

1-8 PLAYERS

ORIGINALITY

CHALLENGE

ACTION

STRATEGY

REFLEXES

OPTIONS

CONTROL
JOYPAD

GAME DIFFICULTY
MEDIUM

CONTINUES
RAM SAVE

SKILL LEVELS
3

RESPONSIVENESS
OKAY

ORIGIN

Developed by US Gold's Banbury division, from a concept for 3DO! The only official Olympic game.

GAME AIM

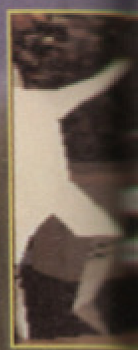
15 disciplines to excel in, playing alone or with company.

BEAT THIS

5 Gold medals.

Days ago, the Games of the 26th Olympiad opened in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, with all the razzmatazz that a billion dollars worth of sponsorship can muster. There is no greater arena for the fittest bodies in the world to test themselves, take the laurels, pretend they know the words to their national anthem then come home and do a series of ads for Quorn, Lucozade and odour eaters.
US Gold have once again come forward to challenge the fittest consoles in the world to a test of 15 virtual polygon-processed events, and the joypads of the world to a severe hammering of the A and B buttons. Fundamentally, is Olympic Games Olympic Gold?





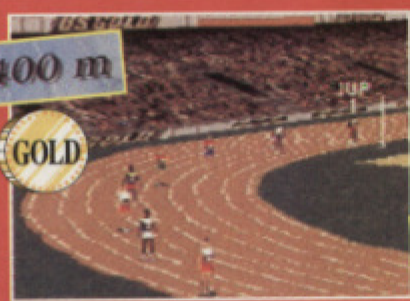
OCTOPLAY

The unique feature of Olympic Games amongst its sportive rivals, is an eight-player mode for the track and swimming events. You will, naturally, need all the joypads and two multi-taps to max your human participation. Playing Olympic mode, and you can watch the dozens of other intelligent CPU participants take their best shot!

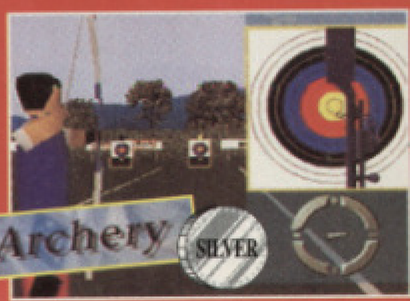
OUR 'MEDALS'



Not much more to it than pummeling your pad to the line. Medals are made by milliseconds.



This event is cool if you have all the players. Stamina has to be strategically allowed for.



The wind complicates an otherwise simple control method. Not too difficult.



A novel approach to the throwing indicator makes discus easier than it normally is.



A really diverse event, and quite successful. The animation is very good.



Not that much different from the discus, and the hammer looks quite convincing.



Simple to get the hang of, but not that sophisticated. It's easy to jump huge heights.



A throwing event that is quite difficult to time without taking your athlete across the line.



A classic rendition of the simplest jumping event. A simple matter of running and timing.



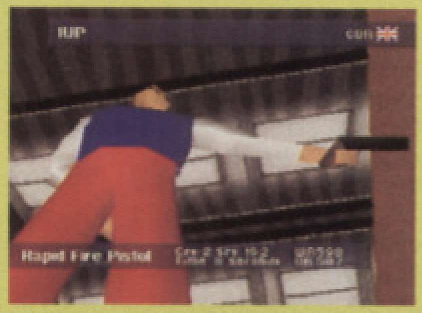
TALK TALK

Following his commentary triumph in Olympic Soccer, Alan Green lets us benefit from his wisdom on athletics. His commentary lauds the record-breakers, and lambasts the no-hopers as they shamble their way through each event.



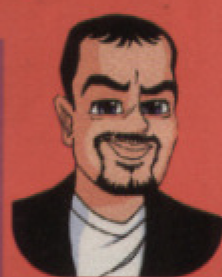
OFF TRACK

Olympic Gold offers a smattering of less visited events for multi-sports games, and they are incidentally some of the most enjoyable. Rapid-Fire pistol, weightlighting, skeet shooting and the mini beat 'em up aspects of Fencing. If you like these (or any event for that matter) you can select a custom game 'challenge' of events.



This Pulp Fiction camera angle for the Rapid Fire event shows Olympic Games at its coolest.

COMMENT



MARCUS

Like Olympic Soccer, this has got a lot going for it that isn't immediately apparent. For a start there are the more unusual events like archery and fencing – both of which I considered highlights. Even the more traditional events like the 100 and 400 metres can be played in an unusual style – a double button bash instead of the rapid alternation that I find so annoying. Alan Green's amusing commentary is another welcome innovation. Looks deceive – this is another step closer to the real thing.

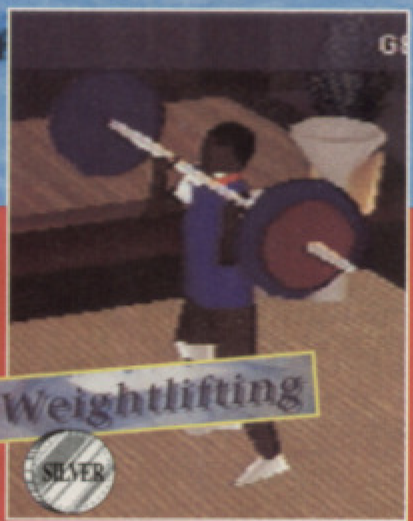
COMMENT



GUS

Take a look and there would be no question of preferring this over Athlete Kings, but it's not as clear cut as might appear. Olympic Games, while frequently a plain Jane of a game, has enough depth to hold its own. The large table of events includes some real gems, and genuine departures from the button-bashing regime of Athlete Kings. Couple this with the huge multi-player option and the epic scale of the Olympic challenge and you have a game of scope and flexibility. The sound effects are also brilliant. However, at the core of this is the familiar territory of multi-sports games, and its drab appearance doesn't do it any favours. Anyway, I had fun.

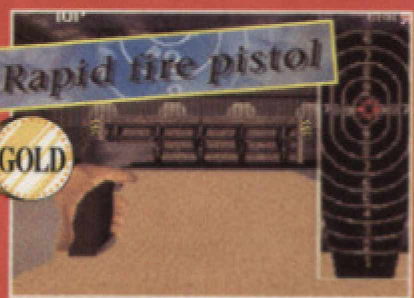




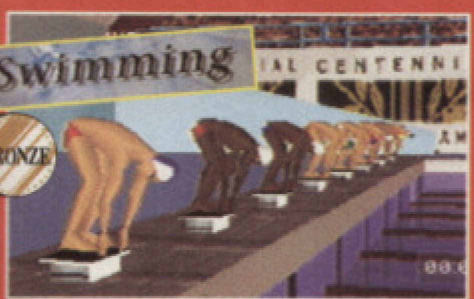
A button bashing event of extreme endurance. You can almost feel the pain at large weights.



Run up, with a separate timing challenge to get the moment of release right.



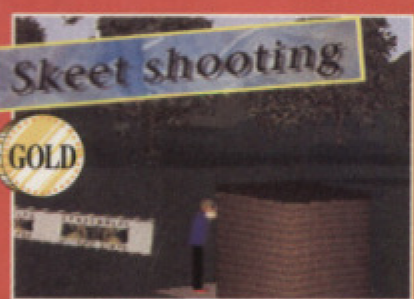
Three rounds of shooting, with a decreasing amount of time allocated for each target.



No breathing rhythm requited, but the stamina bar works similarly to the 400m



Timing the three stage jump is as important as getting a good run up.



Six positions with two targets at each. The targets explode in excellent fashion.

GRAPHICS — 67

▲Quite a variety in graphics.

▼Shockingly simplistic in many events.

ANIMATION — 77

▲Many of the animations make up for the crude characters.

▼Some camerawork is clumsy.

MUSIC — 75

▲US Gold's resident handbag DJ (again!).

▼No 'Chariots of Fire' in-game stuff.

EFFECTS — 83

▲Brilliant use of echoing for indoor events and the commentary is a novel idea.

▼Alan Green tends to repeat himself frequently.

PLAYABILITY — 83

▲Enough scope to vary the gameplay.

▼Still a lot of button-bashing and angle selecting.

LASTABILITY — 83

▲Unequivocally much better with three, four or more participants. The records take some beating.

▼Will appear a bit too dull for some.

OVERALL

A worthy and slightly over ambitious homage to the Olympics. Plenty of programming for your money.

84



BY TITUS

RELEASE AUGUST

PRICE TBA

GAME TYPE PLATFORM

1 PLAYERS

16 MEG

BREAK DOWN

ORIGINALITY

CHALLENGE

ACTION

STRATEGY

REFLEXES

OPTIONS

CONTROL
JOYPAD

GAME DIFFICULTY
TOUGH

CONTINUES
PASSWORD

SKILL LEVELS
1

RESPONSIVENESS
ARRRRGH!

ORIGIN

The sequel to Jordan Mechner's groundbreaking Prince of Persia.

GAME AIM

Escape the catacombs and win the hand of the Princess.

BEAT THIS

Complete 5th dungeon

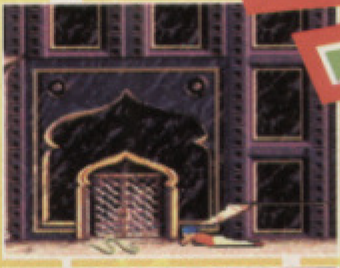
Princ Pers





When Jordan Mechner first coded Prince of Persia on the PC all those years ago, it was considered something of a revolution. Combining tricky platform action with some of the most realistic animation yet seen, it became an instant classic and was subsequently converted to absolutely every machine in the whole world.

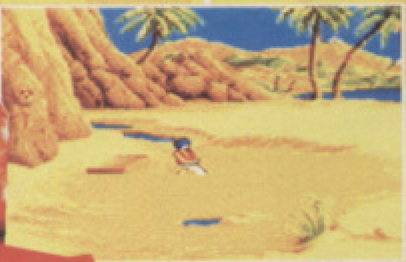
A few years later (quite a few actually) and the inevitable sequel was released. Despite a few improvements, the central mechanics remained much the same as the original, and, unlike its predecessor, Prince of Persia 2 failed to set the gaming world alight. Titles like Another World and Flashback had already taken the 'roto-scoped platform' genre to new heights, and Prince of Persia 2 offered no significant improvement over its previous incarnation. Still, the game picked up a cult following in the States, and did well enough over here to to necessitate another showering of console conversions – including one for the humble Megadrive.

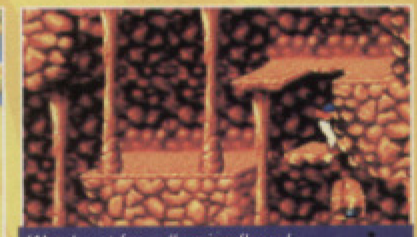












Watch out for collapsing floors!

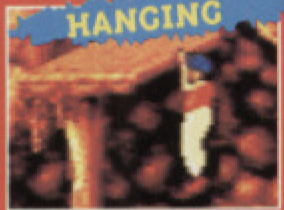
FULL OF EASTERN PROMISE!

Despite the unresponsive controls, our hero is still a flexible fellow, and can perform some quite impressive manoeuvres at times. Here's a quick look at some of the actions you can expect to see him running through during your average Prince of Persia session.

CRAWLING



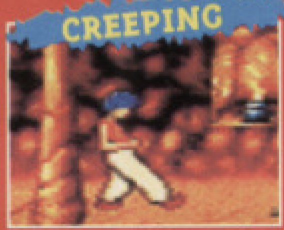
HANGING



JUMPING



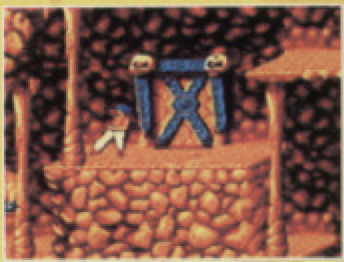
CREEPING

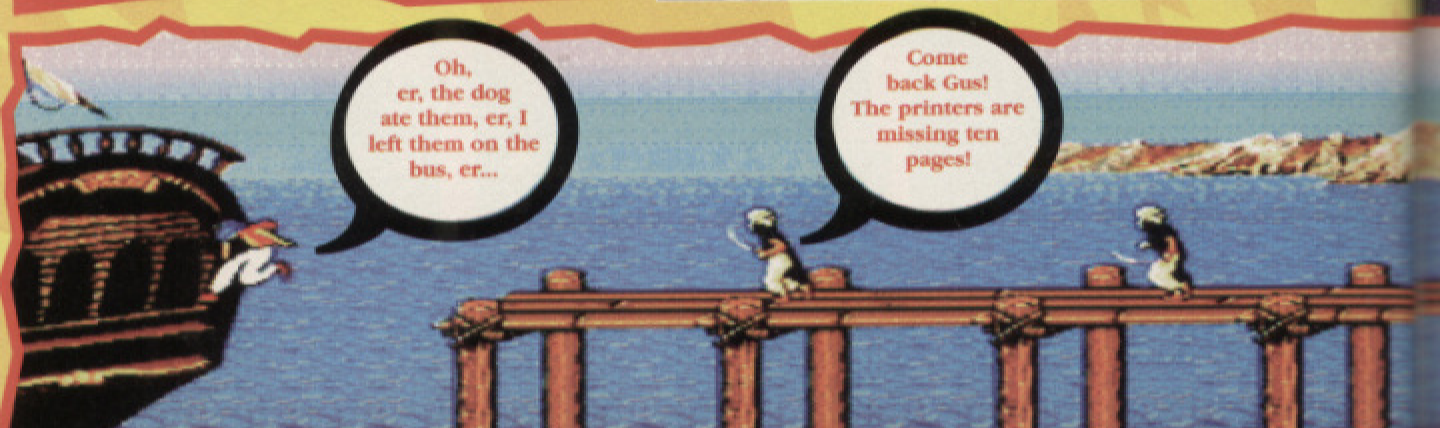




The fresh Prince enjoys 'hanging' out! Tee hee. We're grown up we are.











EIGHT MILLION WAYS TO DIE

Being a game about booby trapped dungeons, Prince of Persia 2 features plenty of imaginative ways in which our hero can buy the farm. Take your pick from death by sword (with a skeleton at the other end), spikes, lava, water, quick-sand, crumbling ceilings or just plain falling down a huge chasm. Whatever your favourite death scene, we recommend you get used to it – you're probably going to be seeing it a lot! What's more, there are no lives in Prince of Persia 2, so when you die its back to the start of the level! Arrrgh!



ALL BECAUSE THE LADY LOVES...

If you've never played Prince of Persia before, you'd be forgiven for thinking that it looks just like any other platformer. However, these 'roto-scoped animation' games always tend to play a bit differently to Sonic or Cool Spot. Because the animation is preprogrammed, when you perform an action on the d-pad the character will carry out the whole of that sequence no matter what! This can prove to be VERY frustrating, especially in situations where your character is running. It takes him a few paces to stop, and if you want to perform a running jump you have to press the button at least two seconds in advance!





COMMENT



DANNI

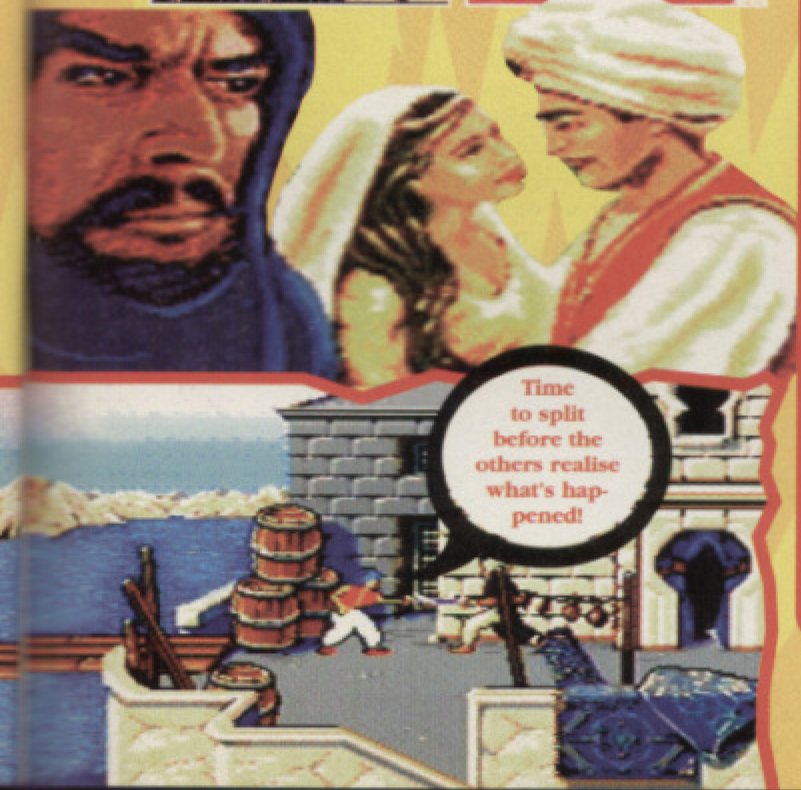
Hmmm. Not my proverbial cuppa I'm afraid. I've never been a big fan of this type of game, and POP2 has done little to convert me. I like a good challenge as much as the next man, but it seems to me that POP2's difficulty comes from the fiddly control method as opposed to ingenious level design. It's all too easy to spend half an hour on a level only to mistime a running jump and find yourself back at the start! Arrrgh! Still, if you enjoyed the original and are looking for more of the same then you'll probably like this. Personally, I don't have the patience for this sort of thing.

COMMENT



MARCUS

I bought the original Prince of Persia on Megadrive and for the time (and it was quite a time ago) it seemed pretty smart. Even though it didn't look so slick, it rewarded my perseverence and lived up to its reputation. Times have changed. I don't play Prince of Persia any more and I won't be playing Prince of Persia 2, for just the reasons that Dan has outlined. Prince of Persia is a well-known license – Mr Mechner should have taken the opportunity to capitalise on that with a progression on the original game, not simply a replay. I'd recommend something like Flashback as a better alternative.



72

▲Nicely detailed.
▼Drab colours and repetitive backdrops.

75

▲Realistic movemement on the main sprite...
▼ ...that doesn't seem as impressive as it did six years ago.

70

▼Sub-standard Middle Eastern fare. Best wack on your own CD.

73

▲The effects are reasonably good...
▼...but far too sparse.

65

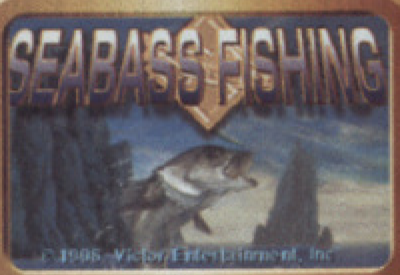
▲A lot of people seem to like the way POP plays.
▼We don't.

80

▲Its huge and rock. And I don't mean the castle.
▼Far too tedious and frustrating.

One for Prince of Persia fans only, we're afraid.

75



BY	JVC
RELEASE	AUGUST
PRICE	£39.99
GAME TYPE	FISHING

BREAK DOWN

1 PLAYERS

ORIGINALITY

OPTIONS
CONTROL
JOYPAD
GAME DIFFICULTY
AVERAGE
CONTINUES
SAVE GAME
SKILL LEVELS
1
RESPONSIVENESS
GOOD

CHALLENGE

ORIGIN
Part of that rare breed – the fishing game. This is the first rod 'n' reel extravaganza to appear for Saturn in the UK.

ACTION

STRATEGY

GAME AIM
Select your captain, bait, route and location. Then wait for a bite and learn to reel the little fellas in. The bigger the better!

REFLEXES

BEAT THIS
Two sea bass and a dolphin

SEABASS



Bored of beat 'em ups? Tired of predictable platformers? Sick of sports games? Well, this is the last call to board the good ship MEAN MACHINES and join us land lubbers on an expedition to uncharted territory.

Well, it's fairly well chartered actually (we have got a map, after all) but it sounds a bit more exciting if you say you're exploring, doesn't it? The coast of Japan is the place, the latest mechanised lures are your tools, and the elusive sea bass your quarry. JVC's new fishing game does more than just simulate fishing – it takes you through the painstaking preparations as well. You chat to the bar landlord, choose your captain, select your lures, the route, even get a crash course in technique and then go for it. Fishing for sea bass can be a strenuous business, so your Captain will even offer you the chance to have a kip during your journey. So, as you can see, it's all a lot more involved than just idling away Saturday morning with a four-pack and the vain hope of landing a wellie or an old pushbike. And, while we await the British spin on fishing (Virtua Canal, anyone?) we can retire to the lodgekeeper's house to enjoy our hard-earned sea bass for dinner. Yum yum.



COMMENT



MARCUS

You could have knocked me down with a kipper when I realised I'd been playing this non-stop for hours. Yup, Sea Bass Fishing is, wait for it, PRETTY GOOD. The screen shots probably don't do justice to this game, which really gets under your skin. Once you've skipped past all the garnish involving your Captain, the maps, your annoying mate and the incomprehensible science surrounding your lures then you'll be locked in a bitter power struggle with your fishy opponents. It takes a while to get the hang of this, but if you've ever played a golf game you'll soon be landing something every time you cast out. It won't always be the sea bass or dolphin you're looking for, but practice makes perfect. Any fishing game, however good, is obviously going to be strictly niche, but Sea Bass Fishing gets the thumbs up from this salty sea dog.

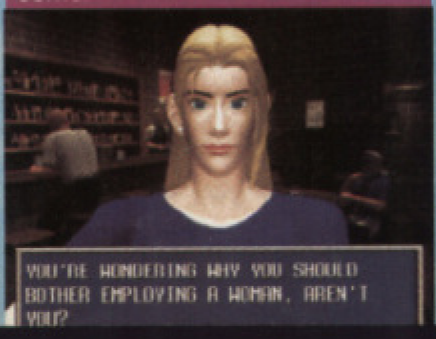
COMMENT



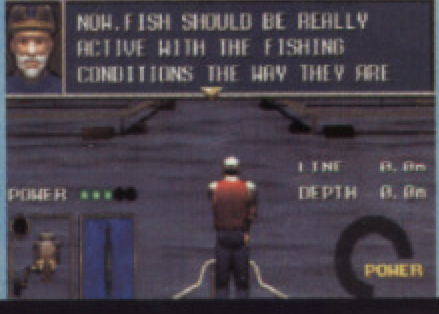
DAN

I must admit that the prospect of spending hours playing a fish 'em up seemed about as appealing as being slapped with a wet kipper. But stone me, if this isn't a laugh! Reeling in the fish can prove to be quite exciting, and what other game lets you fish for dolphins or take a mid-morning nap?

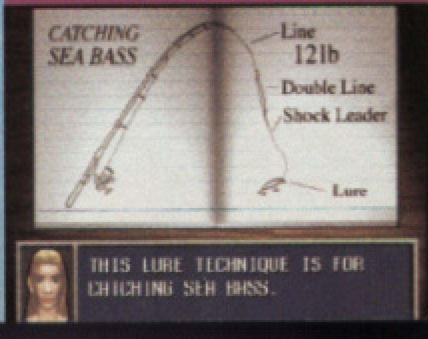
Select your skipper at the lodge house. Even girls are allowed to come.



For the best results, take advantage of your captain's experience.



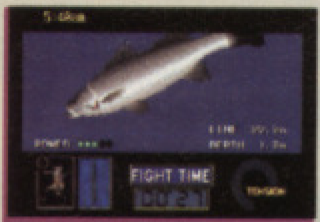
Beginners take note – it's not all fun fun fun on the ocean waves.



FISHING

VIRTUA COD

The coast of Japan is remarkably well-stocked considering the nation's angling habits. There's a wide variety of marine life to bag – you choose what you're aiming to land at the lodge at the beginning. Land the wrong type of fish, or slight specimens of the ones you're actually after, and you'll have to put up with the sneers of your companion or the polite dismay of your captain. Either way, you'll have to throw the little nippers back.



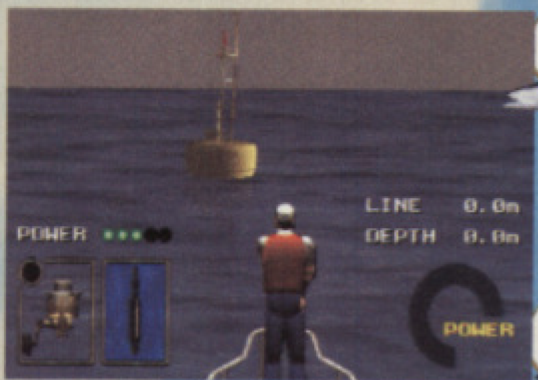
Increase the line tension when you get a bite...



...and push the line and the fish as far as they will go.







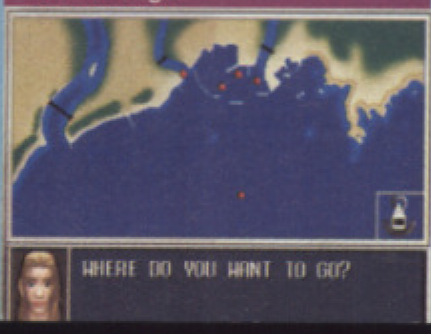




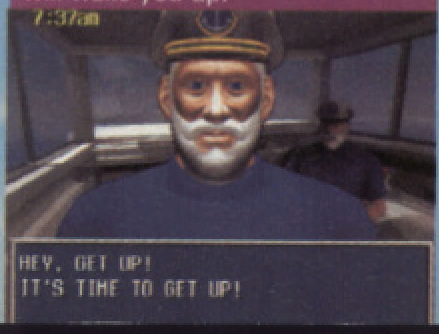
Your captain will select your lures for you. Change them only if you're smart enough.



You'll be resticted from visiting certain areas until you're proficient enough.



You can even have a kip below deck if you get tired! The captain will wake you up.



GRAPHICS — 76

▲The fish themselves look impressive when they're biting.
▼Some of the routines become repetitive.

ANIMATION — 79

▲When the fish bite the game really comes alive.
▼It's needlessly static elsewhere.

MUSIC — 78

▲Laid back jazz score gives way to to a sort of speeded up 'theme from Jaws' when the critters bite.
▼There's not enough variety.

EFFECTS — 72

▼Largely consist of your reel clicking and the line straining. Neither are great.

PLAYABILITY — 83

▲There's genuine suspense, and a real skill to be learned.
▼The exciting bits are punctuated by spells of boredom. Bit like fishing, really.

LASTABILITY — 81

▲It's a big ocean, and there's plenty to catch.
▼You don't get to see much of it, and a lot of the interesting f

OVERALL — 80

A bizarre and surprisingly addictive game that won't suit everybody.



BY	TIME WARNER
RELEASE	AUGUST
PRICE	£44.99
GAME TYPE	BEAT 'EM UP

BREAK DOWN

1-2 PLAYERS

ORIGINALITY

CHALLENGE

ACTION

STRATEGY

REFLEXES

OPTIONS

CONTROL
JOYPAD

GAME DIFFICULTY
AVERAGE

CONTINUES
UNLIMITED

SKILL LEVELS
16

RESPONSIVENESS
OK

ORIGIN

Originally a coin-op. This arrives a full year after the Megadrive, 32X and Game Gear versions.

GAME AIM

Become the top dinosaur god in the meteor-ravaged Earth of the future. By kicking ass.

BEAT THIS

184175 followers

VERTIGO

Vertigo is an alien creature in reptilian/dinosaur form. She came from the stars when a meteor triggered the great cataclysm – now she uses her laser spitting attacks to vie for supremecy with the other gods.



ARMADON

A Tristagasaurtops that lived in the caverns beneath the Earth before the meteor struck. After the cataclysm he journeyed to the surface of the planet to restore balance.



DIABLO

A prisoner of the inferno, the cataclysm gave Diablo the opportunity to escape his fiery confinement. Now he roams the surface of the new Earth, burning anyone in his path.



SAURON

The cataclysm destroyed Sauron's food source, so he roams beyond his usual hunting ground, searching for alternative forms of nourishment to preserve his immortality.



He's got a lot to answer for, that Steven Spielberg. The Flintstones had got us used to thinking that dinosaurs were nice guys that you could keep for pets, take for walks and eat in burger buns if you got peckish. Then Jurassic Park came along and suddenly the big scaly fellas were bad news again.

Well, if you thought those beasties meant business you should cop a load of this lot. Yup, they're back – Time Warner are continuing their ongoing mission to introduce Primal Rage to every format known to mankind. The Saturn version has been tweaked and improved not only from previous 16 bit versions, but from the Playstation version that preceded it. Among the innovations here are new FMV animations which profile the dinosaurs and link their bouts into a 'dinosaurs dominate a nightmarish disaster-ravaged Earth of the future'-type scenario. The native humans that worship the dinosaurs (or become their lunch, depending on what mood you're in) are also back, but with a few new stars - the scantily-clad girlies that rush up to the screen and beg you to carry on when you're offered the chance to contine. The dinosaurs, with their bonkers special moves, are just as loopy in 32-bit as they were before. All in all, it's business as usual in the land that time forgot.





CHAOS

A native of the ruins, Chaos was blighted by a spell from a shaman which condemned him to tackle all the other dinosaur gods in a bid for ultimate supremecy. Which was nice.





OK, so we can figure out how big dinosaurs were by examining their skeletons. But how do we know what colour they were? Answer me that, eh?

TUG OF WAR

A novel variation on the usual versus option is Tug Of War. In addition to each player's 'brain' power bar (which indicates concussion levels and eventually bursts your heart if you lose) is a long vein-type power indicator that runs along the top of the screen. You can increase your share of the power in the top bar by attacking the opposing player. Games are won by edging your power across the screen until it engulfs your opponent. Who's probably had his head kicked in by then anyway. In addition to this, Primal Rage also features a 1 player training mode (so you can perfect your wees, farts and pukes) and an endurance knockout tournament.



The 'vein' at the top of the screen indicates who's winning the tug of war.



COMMENT



GUS

Any game that uses Simon Bates to push it is asking for trouble. But even if they had Joanne Guest doing her cavewoman bit, Primal Rage would still find it difficult to get much attention. It is, frankly, old hat, now that stupendous conversions of Virtua Fighter 2, Streetfighter Alpha and Mortal Kombat 3 are sharing shelf space like this, it's heading for extinction.

COMMENT

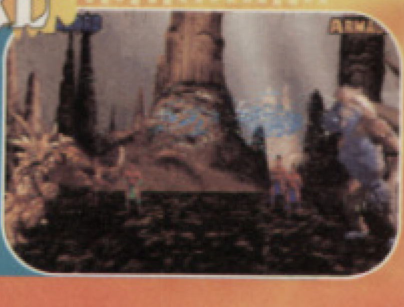


MARCUS

A year has passed since the Game Gear and Megadrive versions of Primal Rage arrived in the office. Much has happened since then - sales of the game in its various formats have apparently failed to live up to Time Warner's high expectations, despite a massive push that included a TV advertising campaign. Could it be that this is, gulp, not that great? While it remains a cheeky and outrageous game, it's been well and truly outgunned in the daftness and playability stakes over the last year by Capcom, who have got this sort of thing down to a fine art. Unfortunately, if you take away the once considerable novelty value of Primal Rage's special moves all that you're left with is a fairly ordinary beat 'em up underneath. And there are enough outstanding beat 'em ups around to render this particular species extinct.

BLIZZARD

Entombed in ice inside the high mountain cliffs, the cataclysm melted the glaciers and freed Blizzard. He came down from the snowy wastes to battle for control of the new Earth.



GRAPHICS 83

▲Colourful and quite detailed.
▼The new FMV sequences are poor.

ANIMATION 76

▼Backgrounds are disappointingly static, and there aren't enough frames to effectively realise the dinosaurs' movements.

MUSIC 83

▲Prehistoric zylophone symphonies, with Deep Purple's Smoke On The Water plugged into the mix at one point.

EFFECTS 78

▲The growls, snarls and slashes are simple but punchy.
▼There should have been greater variety.

PLAYABILITY 80

▲Gore freaks should be pleased with this game's 'buckets of blood' approach to fighting.
▼It's not very sophisticated stuff.

LASTABILITY 77

▲Only successful completion on the hardest difficulty levels yields the full game.
▼ 1 player games aren't as much fun as playing, er, human challengers.

OVERALL

A fair conversion of a disappointing coin-op. For dino fans only.

79

PRO·PINBALL

RELEASE: ....JULY	MEG:....................................CD
PLAYERS:........................1-4	PRICE:............................. TBA
BY: ....EMPIRE	GAME TYPE:.......PINBALL

Category	Score	Comment
GRAPHICS	82	Very impressive. Rich in detail.
EFFECTS	88	All the necessary noises do the business.
ANIMATION	82	60 frames per second – smooth as a baby's bum.
PLAYABILITY	82	Strictly pinball, with some smart dot matrix games.
MUSIC	90	Top notch – and very 'real' sounding.
LASTABILITY	75	Only having one table is very limiting.
OVERALL	80	Great, as far as it goes. Which is only one table.

When does a game stop being a game and start being a simulation? The variety of pinball games on offer belong to a genre that mixes and matches both kinds of title.

Empire have gone to a lot of trouble to provide as accurate a simulation as possible of that corner-of-the-pub-experience. While other games have accentuated the 'fantasy' element with bizarre sub-games and ridiculous tables, Pro Pinball plays it down the line, only giving in to the occasional bouts of madness with the mini-games played out on the dot matrix screen above the flipper fun. There isn't space to go into all the table's gizmos, but everything looks extremely realistic. And if that wasn't enough, the game features twenty new tracks of music by Jake Burns and Bruce Foxton of Stiff Little Fingers, the early Eighties rockers who recently supported the Sex Pistols. If it was any more realistic you'd need 50p to play it.





DOTTY MINI MADNESS



The dot matrix display above the pinball table is the game's key source of variety and offers most surprises. The mini-games, which are activated by triggering certain areas of the table, can bump up your score and offer you extra or multi-balls. The screen was developed specifically by TV animation specialists Mind's Eye and offers a number of simple arcade style puzzle/shooting games which you respond to using the 'flipper' buttons on your joypad.





Four actors specially recorded the voice work heard in Pro Pinball...



...including the lady that played the lift in Blade Runner. She's feeling much better now.



The multi-ball option can put as many as six of the little fellas on the table at once.

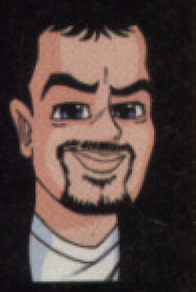
COMMENT



GUS

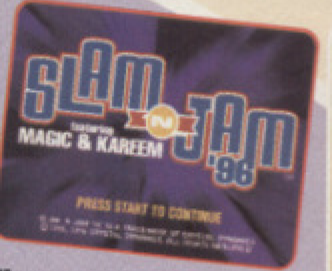
The table in Pro Pinball is the best of any computer game simulation so far. There's little dispute about that. However, I'm not so sure there's the amount of play in that one table that warrants the price tag. But let's concentrate on what is, rather than what isn't part of the deal. The vital elements — good layout and realistic ball movement — are firmly in place, the graphics are hi-res, the sound superb.

COMMENT



MARCUS

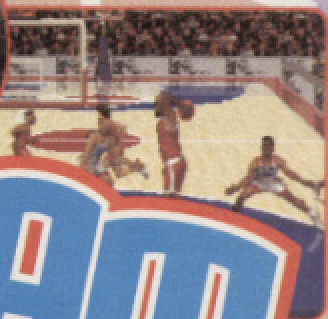
There's no doubting Pro Pinball's technical standard - the game has an unrivalled polish and quality. Gameplay is similarly faultless, with the ball and table responding very realistically. Even the dot matrix bonus games are good fun, with a greater variety and inventiveness here than I've seen anywhere else. So what's the problem? There just isn't enough of this. Pro Pinball is going to face competition from quality multi-table games such as True Pinball and the one table on offer here, good as it may be, probably isn't going to be enough to satisfy most people.



If you're up for a bit of footie or basketball on your Saturn then you're probably used to the players looking a bit like the smooth-featured cast of Cleudo. Well, for Slam and Jam 96 Crystal Dynamics decided to put an end to all that and created some unusually large sprites that not only look like the players but play like them as well. The price we've evidently paid for this innovation is some cloth-cutting elsewhere – the view is restricted to a perspective behind each hoop at the very end of the court. At half time you swap round, but you view matches from the same perspective, bar replays. The commentary's laid on by NBA veteran Van Earl Wright who quips about the tournaments and exhibitions you play against actual teams or teams of 'all stars' – fantasy squads picked by Magic and Kareem to highlight the very best players for them to play alongside. Let's play ball...







RELEASE: JULY	MEG: 4
PLAYERS: 1-4	PRICE: £44.99
BY: BMG	GAME TYPE: BASKETBALL

Category	Score	Comment
GRAPHICS	82	The players look great. The limited perspective doesn't.
EFFECTS	70	Plimsoll squeaks are good, but the commentary's very repetitive.
ANIMATION	81	Narrow, but very smooth.
PLAYABILITY	77	Smooth, fast-moving and fun. But relatively limited
MUSIC	80	Thumpin' tunes to get you in the mood.
LASTABILITY	71	For long term, realistic play, you might want more than this offers.
OVERALL	75	Unsophisticated but furious and engrossing.

SLAM N JAM '96

COMMENT



MARCUS

This is fast-paced, smooth and very sensibly structured stuff that is more a frantic ball blitz than a completely accurate simulation. As well as stealing, passing, shooting and isolating there are 'special moves' like sprinting which speed games to frantic conclusions. There are obvious downsides – the fixed perspective causes great frustration if you're on the far side of the court but just as annoying is Van Earl Wright's commentary. This is hilarious at first, but soon annoyingly repetitive.

COMMENT



GUS

I find it difficult to be so charitable to Slam and Jam as Marcus. The first few games are reasonably entertaining, but then the two dimensional aspect of the game begins to irritate. Although there's a pseudo-3D in the screen view, the Saturn is really just scaling sprites. This isn't so much a problem, but the rigidly dictated view restricts the gameplay, which is 'back and forth' stuff. Me, I'd go for Sega's NBA Action.





SLAMMING WITH THE STARS

The stars of this show are Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and his partner Earvin 'Magic' Johnson. The 7ft 2in Abdul-Jabbar is American basketball's "perfect big man". In a professional career that lasted from 1969 to 1988 he accumulated a record 38,387 points – an average of 11.2 per game. The 6ft 9in Johnson has won the NBA's Most Valuable Player Award more times than any other 'guard' player in history. He also holds the NBA's all-time record for assists. As the commentator excitedly points out, "the man's gotta have wings!"

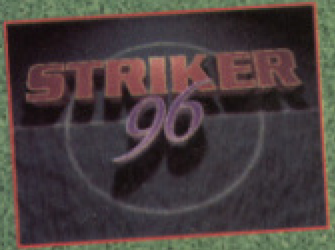






Euro 96 sent the entire nation into a football frenzy – all of which only increased the market's already healthy appetite for footie games. Acclaim have joined the ranks of software houses supplying demand.

The bells and whistles of Saturn soccer are now expected of any game and Striker is no exception. But what new features does this latest footie fest offer the discerning punter? Well, a pseudo Euro '96 option for one thing – you can get the game to arrange the teams in the same groups as they appeared in at the start of the championships. If this wasn't enough there's a smart indoor option where pared down teams compete in fast-moving arena games where the ball always stays in play.



Following in the footsteps of John Motson, Barry Davies and Alan Green is Scotland's finest, Andy Gray. Sky TV's voice of soccer delivers his own distinctive style of excitable-yet-curiously-laid-back commentary, usually restricting himself to wincing over particularly bone-crunching tackles. "Och, that would have hurt!", "No holding back there!", "Och, I felt that!". You get the picture.

COMMENT



MARCUS

OK, straight to the point – is this any better than Fifa, Euro or Olympic Soccer? No is the short answer. Striker is smooth-running, extremely fast and features a truck load of options. But the gameplay is more arcade orientated than in other titles, and matches, while sometimes being quite good fun, aren't really football simulations. The commentary is a big disappointment, with a narrow selection of sometimes inappropriate phrases which set a new low standard. The major redeeming feature is the indoor option, but if you're only planning to buy one football game this year it's just not enough.

RELEASE: ....JULY	MEG:.............................. 4
PLAYERS:..................1-4	PRICE:........................£39.99
BY: ....ACCLAIM	GAME TYPE:.....FOOTBALL

Category	Score	Comment
GRAPHICS	83	Good sprites, good stadiums, good pitches. Good, really.
EFFECTS	68	Crowd and ball noises are OK. The commentary is very poor.
ANIMATION	84	Does what's required with a smooth all-round appearance.
PLAYABILITY	79	Fast, smooth and especially playable indoors.
MUSIC	81	There's a crunching intro tune that sets the scene well.
LASTABILITY	80	There are enough options here to keep this fresh.
OVERALL	79	Good for quick indoor kick-around, but this isn't football.

COMMENT



DAN

I agree with Marcus that Striker doesn't play a very realistic game of football, but in some ways I think that works to its advantage. The market is absolutely saturated with realistic footie sims at the moment, and Striker offers a real alternative. From the small sized pitch to the indoor option, everything in Striker is geared towards immediately gratifying action, and in that respect the game can be fun. However, players looking for true footie thrills would be better off seeking something a little more substantial.





FOOTBALL WIZARDS

Striker's greatest innovation is that it offers the opportunity to play your matches inside glass-domed arenas. With none of the weather problems that can slow down outside matches the ball is extremely responsive. Because there are no goal kicks or throw-ins, and the ball can't go off side, matches move at a bewildering pace and scores tend to be high. The office tournaments soon resembled frenzied games of human pinball, with each team sometimes scoring as many as 7 goals!





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GUARDIAN HEROES
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1-6 PLAYERS
SEGA
BEAT 'EM UP



Quite why the import version of this game got such a severe kicking in certain quarters is really beyond us. Now that Treasure's latest little gem is finally available in the UK, we recommend that you take a look at a multi-player beat 'em up with a difference. What's the difference? Well, superb Manga-style graphics; three planes of combat (you can tackle rivals in the foreground, middle and background); up to six (yes, six) players and a whopping 25 levels than can be played in virtually any order. Playing as new characters and discovering their spectacular magic spells adds an extra longevity to a game that already scores high on originality in the tired beat 'em up genre. You're only likely not to be interested in this game if a) you find the frenzied all-in scraps a bit confusing to follow; b) you have no mates to play it with; c) you're completely mad.



OUT NOW





OVERALL 93

A truly unique multi-player beat 'em up in a class of its own.

DISCWORLD
£44.99
1 PLAYER
SEGA
ADVENTURE

OUT NOW



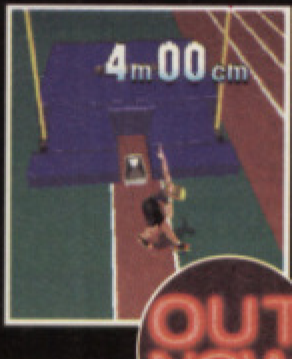
There's no doubting the technical achievement that is Discworld – the vast point and click adventure game based on Terry Pratchett's best-selling series of novels. You play the apprentice wizard Rincewind who, on an epic quest to discover a dragon that requires slaying, ambles into all sorts of adventures and bizarre encounters dreamed up by one of the country's best-selling authors. The graphics are distinctive and amusing and the animation is smooth. An extra dimension is provided by the voice work of Eric Idle, Tony Robinson and the late Jon Pertwee. How much you like this will depend on whether you've got the time and patience to do it justice. Having a copy of the solution book to hand also helps. The only thing preventing this getting a higher score is our low tolerance of Pratchett's sixth-form humour, which is obviously one of the most prominent elements in the game.



OVERALL 80

A huge point and click adventure that Pratchett fans will love. Everyone else might give in to frustration.

ATHLETE KINGS
£44.99
1-2 PLAYERS
SEGA
MULTI-SPORTS



OUT NOW



The game formerly known as Decathlete is the brainchild of Sega's AM3 division, who used the ST-V development system (previously used on such diverse titles as Baku Baku and Funky Head Boxers) to create this 'Track and Field with gags' championship. All the events you'd expect are here – 400 metres, hurdles, long jump, high jump, pole vault etc – but what makes this so distinctive is the exceptional 'solidity' of the smooth graphics and the bizarre caricatures that pass as your team representatives. The US team have the posy Rick Blade, the Germans have the foppish Karl Vain, the Russians have an Eddie the Eagle lookalike called Aleksei Rigel and we have the incredible Jef Jansens – a man with an afro that must have earned him a place in Earth, Wind and Fire during the 1970s. The only really cool character is, surprise surprise, the Japanese athlete, Joe Kudou. If you can see past the comedy characters then you'll find no complaints in the strenuous but straightforward gameplay. If there are any real shortcomings here, it's that there's no commentary and a maximum of two players, but neither of these factors should put you off.

OVERALL 89
Brilliant graphics, solid gameplay, daft competitors. One for those who don't take sports too seriously.

BAKU BAKU ANIMAL
£44.99
1 PLAYER
SEGA PC
PUZZLE

SEGA PC

OUT NOW

Unfortunately, this 'must have' Saturn game has lost much of its polish in the transition to PC – the graphics aren't as detailed (the animals chomp the food without the characteristic saliva splashes) and everything is less smooth than before.



Another disappointment is the music, which is generated by the PC's sound card rather than sourced from the disc. There is, however, a brand new 'dance mix' of the distinctive Baku music which didn't appear on the Japanese original. The gameplay is still unbeatable, and this is likely to be unrivalled in the PC puzzle game stakes, but we think we'll stick to our Saturn copy.

RISE 2: RESURRECTION
£44.99
1-2 PLAYERS
ACCLAIM
BEAT 'EM UP



OUT NOW

Shipping out games without allowing the games press to pass judgement is a disreputable enterprise. Developers Mirage must still have been smarting from the reviews for Rise of the Robots, which was as close to garbage as games get. This is getting there, with few of the benefits of 32-bit technology, or the ideas of games design of the last couple of years filtering through. In Resurrection we have a leaden, drab, uninspired and unrewarding rehash of the 2-D combat game, the kind Capcom create with unmatched flair. In fact this is inferior to every other example on the system, and that includes Streetfighter: The Movie!



OVERALL 35
An utter dog's dinner.

VIRTUA FIGHTER
£44.99
1-2 PLAYERS
SEGA PC
BEAT 'EM UP

SEGA PC



This can be played as either Virtua Fighter or Virtua Fighter Remix – the only discernible disadvantage of adding the textures for 'Remix mode' is the loss of light sourcing. A slight loss of details in the backgrounds similarly can't deter from the fact that this is likely to blow PC novices away. At the very least it will show up rivals like FX Fighter to be the impostors they are. Be warned, however – although the disc will tell you the recommended minimum spec to run the game is a P75, the reality lies somewhere between a P90 and a P133 with a whopping 60 meg hard drive space and 8-16 meg memory. This really is an essential game though – if your machine is up to it.



OUT NOW

MEAN YOB

Peace brothers. I, Yob, have just returned from visiting my guru, Nakinoo, in his Walthamstead shrine, where he and his wife Nikki made me most welcome. We shared the symbolic meat pies of friendship and indulged in the ancient ritual of lighting each other's farts with the Zippo of enlightenment. It makes me so sad to return to the sullied world of 'games' and 'readers'. How petty your concerns are. Still if you must, send them to: MEAN YOB, MEAN MACHINES SEGA, PRIORY COURT, 30-32 FARRINGDON LANE, LONDON, EC1R 3AU.

ORVILLE

Dear Yob,
I am getting fed up with you taking the mick out of other people.
I mean, in issue number 44 people are talking about turds and rear ends but it has obviously not occured to you that maybe you make readers stop reading your section of the mag due to you being so offensive. And oh yes, don't go making any biast [sic] comments about this letter.
From Lee Roach (aged 12).
P.S. Don't take the mick out of my name.

YOB: But 'wads like yourself make it so difficult to stay civil. Does your letter have a point to make about games? Does it share with us what an intelligent young man you are? No, you demonstrate that you couldn't be arsed to check your spelling and you're probably heading for a 2-week HND in serving chips. By the way if your first name was cock, that would be hilarious. Maybe I should call you Dick Roach.

OCTAVIA

Dear Yob,
We have a couple of points to sort out (they're not questions, so don't tell us to sod off to Q and A). So there.
1. LB's opinion: why do you wear pink knickers? CC's opinion: yeah, I think you've been on that beach too long. Tranny.
2. We know how Sonic got blue. So how did Knuckles get his pinkness and knuckles? Uh-oh, a question.
3. We have this smelly maths teacher. His knickname is Flo. Any relation?
4. We need boyfriends, and would like you to sell them in Mega Mart (we're girls).
5. We're really sorry you have lost all bowel control.
6. Send us a copy of Loaded.
7. CC: This is a message to all boys. I'm gorgeous!
Luv from L.B. and C.C. aka 'the Two Young Misses'.

YOB: You probably think you're a couple of crazy young gals, and so funny with it. You sit there in Maths taking the piss, thinking, 'this is a real laff'. Will you be laughing when you're flogging Jockey Y-fronts in Littlewoods and exchanging old ladies' skiddy knickers which they claim not have used? I think not. No copies of Loaded I'm afraid, but pick up a cheap man at my meat market.

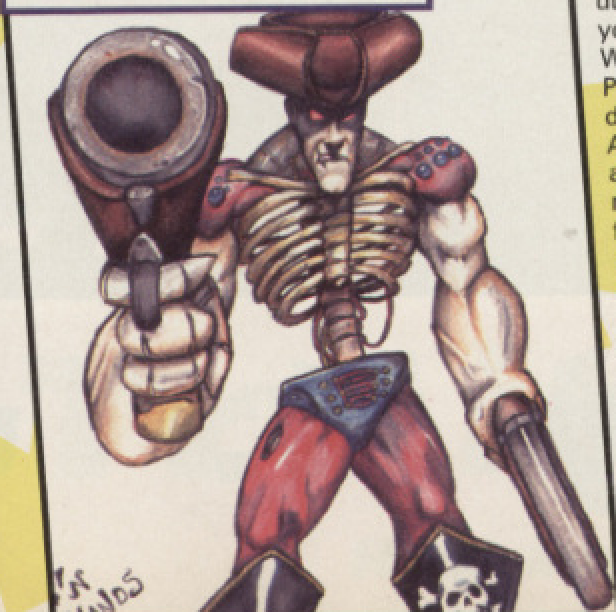


Thanks to Gary Zammit from Southend for this Loaded masterpiece. Spot the initials!

EMU

Dear Yob,
I've been reading Mean Machines for ages and have had enough of your pathetic attempts to act hard (which is a bit difficult for a piece of turd from a monkey's arse like you). I don't know why you bother putting a picture of yourself on your page, if I looked as sad as you do, I would hide myself from the world. I mean take your, er, shades for instance. Complete and utter rubbish! Where did you get them, a museum? Worn by the Roman Plebius Maximus no doubt?
Also, why do you wear armour? Oh no, don't tell me, its to protect you from being trodden on by your dog – sorry – your mum. And why do you have a massive gun? Oh no, wait, its to protect you from hostile insects, all of which are much larger than yourself. Lastly, although I could go on forever, what wonder is this? They've found a way to grow hair on a meatball. Look its Yob's head. You fat git!
Patrick Morgan, Guildford.

YOB: I've never be so insulted in all my life. Well, so cack-handedly insulted by someone who couldn't cuss the skin of a week old cup of coffee (try leaving one in your bedroom. It goes copper green, I bet you). You obviously worked yourself up to saying 'arse' for three months, before reverting into the tedious Home Counties writing style of a spoilt little toss.



Loaded's the flavour of the month – this one's from Steven James in Gargrave. Ta!

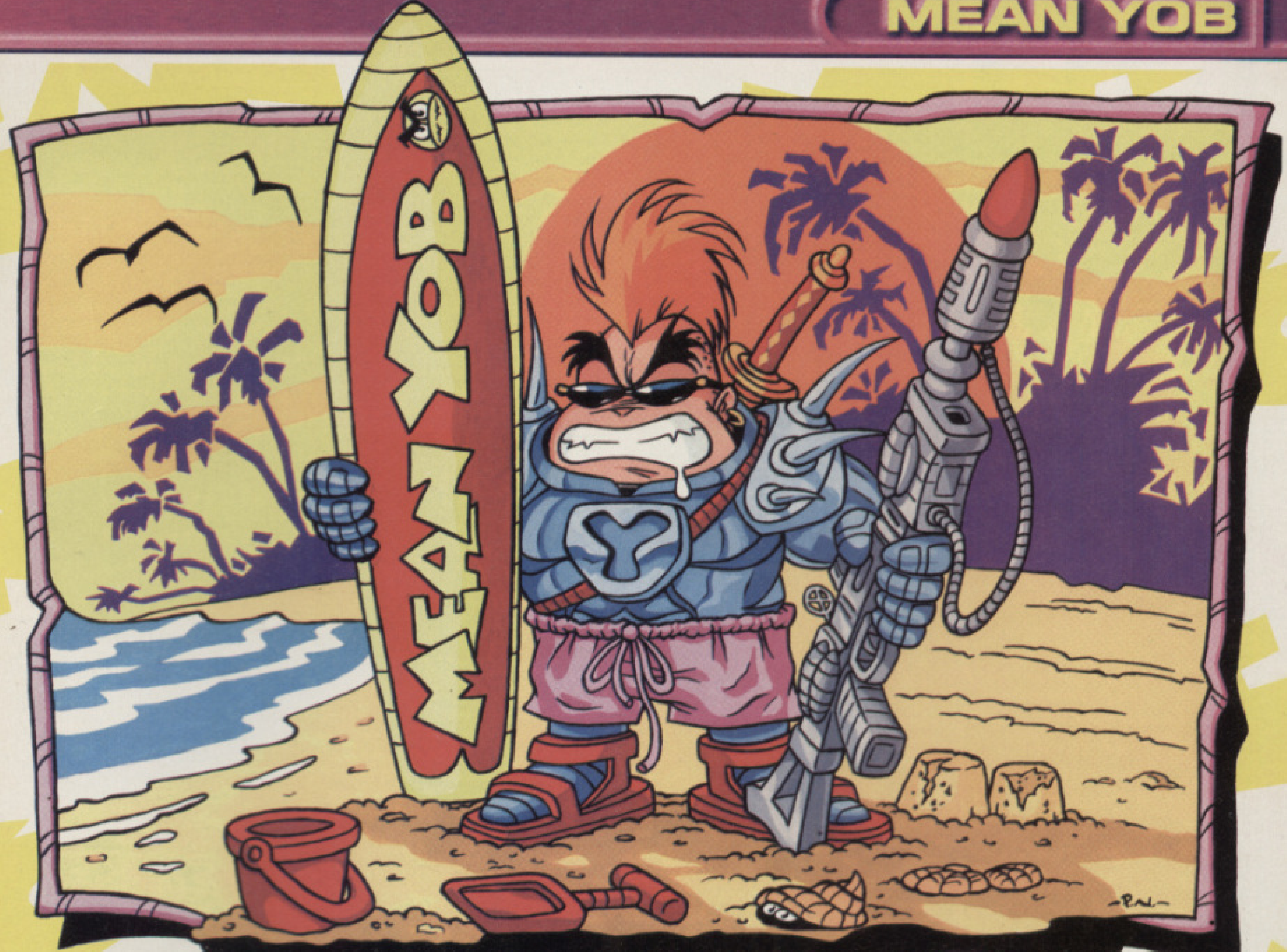
DAFFY

Dear Yob,
Right mate, you'd better be thankfull [sic] for this here letter because we had to escape from the Albino mental hospital for headless chickens, hop through Bosnia, jump to the moon and climb through a polo, just to write to you. By the way, you SHEPARD'S MARZIPAN CHIMP PASTE [?]. Our mate Albert Looney-legs says he saw your head rolling down Oxford street. Is this true? Or is A.L. just being a fraggle? Answer our questions or the fat cat will fart your brains out. 1. Who is the funky monkey? 2. How now? 3. Why is your hair so naff?
Daniel Kemp and Russel Eke, Brighton.

YOB: This letter is just piece of **. That's all I have to say.**

JOANNE GUEST

Dear Yob,
I have been following your magazine ever since it started. Because of this, it has made me realise that I would love to do computer programming as some sort of career. I



am 15 years old and am very near to my final GCSE exams, so I need a career soon to continue through to college. I have loads of ideas for computer games, it's just setting myself a starting point. Thank you very much reading this letter and I hope you can help me.
Ryan Wareing, Daventry.
YOB: I can't help but read your letter Ryan, seeing as you send so bloody many of them. A tip: phoning up Virgin and saying 'I have a great idea for a game' is not going to do it. If you want to be a programmer or designer, you're going to have to put some hours in. Get a PC, buy programming books, buy really crap rock band T-shirts, lose all taste in music, abandon your friends and become really ugly, be socially inept in every situation, laugh at programmer jokes and live on a diet of Coca Cola and Picnic bars. Develop life-threatening acne, never expect to have a girlfriend and die buried with a copy of Nobby Goes Ski-ing in your coffin. Good luck!


Zabel from Vampire Hunter – courtesy the prolific pen of Steven James. Keep 'em coming.

CHANTICLEER

Dear Yob,
Thank you for producing what is the best Sega magazine around, even though I do still buy Sega Power. My cousin owns a SNES and has told me that he wants to buy a Nintendo 64. I choke as I say these words because I own a Sega Saturn, a Megadrive and a Game Gear – there are great games on all of them, especially the Saturn. However, I can't believe that Nintendo and Sega are teaming up together so they can get Sonic off us. Why is this occurring? Anyway, keep up the good work and may your magazine live forever and ever.
Matthew Bullman, Castleford, West Yorkshire.
YOB: Matthew sit down, put head between legs, unzip shorts with incisors and relax. Sonic is going nowhere apart from Saturn and Megadrive (okay, maybe the PC). There is no way he would deign to grace that overhyped doorstop known as – what is it this week? – Nintendo 64.

MAUI MALLARD

Dear Yob,
I've had enough of everyone moaning about their games and their computers. The Saturn is a pucka computer and the games out at the moment are more than adequate. People just want and want and want what they haven't got. This has a lot to do with advertising, but I won't go into that now. People are confused. The Saturn is the same as the Playstation, but both Sega and Sony are rushing their games and it's destroying morale. To put it simply, steak and chips doesn't taste nice raw! So please stop moaning to the mags and use your ink to ask sensible questions and talk to each other peacefully, like we used to before the war.
Sam Foston, London.
YOB: This is obviously the man who wants to be Paul Johnson, lecturing us like some old bid who gets her windows panned on a regular basis. Steak and chips tastes lovely raw, especially when served with turd tartare, which brings us neatly back to your letter, which is garbage garnished with a large sachet of runny brown sauce.

Possibly the worst letters page in the world dived to a depth even the Titanic's passengers never experienced. Next month I want a letter from a Tug Boat captain, a card from a foreign missionary woman and a package from a sewage outflow inspector. Get to it!

Q&A

For some people, eating macaroni with chips seems unusual, since you're eating pasta and potatoes: two separate carbohydrate sources. But it's actually better to digest a mixture of these energy sources to sustain you throughout your strenuous lifestyle. Answering letters, for example, can leave me feeling drained and off-colour, so I often reach for the macaroni, the penne, even the linguine tricolore, after a hard day at the office. Incidentally, does anyone still have a working Shaker Maker? Send it to me with your Q&A letters at Gus@Pasta.Chips. Q&A, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London, EC1R.



GABY ROSLIN

Dear Gus,
I'll get right to the point. Answer my questions PLEASE!
1. I'm a big fan of Daytona USA in the Arcade, will the new Deluxe Edition be as graphically impressive as Sega Rally, or will it be pop-up city like Saturn Daytona?
2. Do you have any firm information? A release date? Number of courses perhaps?
3. What about Manx TT?
4. Which is better Daytona (on Saturn) or Need for Speed?
5. Is the Sega driving stick peripheral worth it?
Mike Hunt, London
GUS: **Very amusing, 'Mike'. 1. It will be closer to Rally than it was Daytona. 2. Hopefully November release. Sega are expecting an alpha disk in August. We expect 2-3 extra tracks. 3. Very quiet on that front. It's being programmed in Australia and there's a Psygnosis connection. 4. Daytona is the better game, overall. 5. It does add something to many driving games, but I wouldn't personally shell out for it.**

CHRIS EVANS

Dear Gus,
Hope you're enjoying the summer. Lovely weather isn't it? Right, now I've buttered you up how about a few quessies. [sic]
1. When will Ultimate Mortal Kombat be coming out? You reviewed it ages ago.
2. Any chance of Mortal Kombat Trilogy on the Saturn?
3. My mate told me that Mortal Kombat 4 is going to be in 3D and feature more polygons than Virtua Fighter 3. Is this true?
4. I just got Virtua Cop and am thinking about getting a second gun. Are those cheap third party guns much cop (tee hee)?
5. Don't suppose you've got a spare gun going have you?
Graham Stewart, Sheffield



GUS: **1. Sorry, GT delayed it. Should be out now. 2. No plans. 3. He don't know jack. 4. Marcus has a couple (he just couldn't get his hands on official guns) and he assures me they are fine (I've got the official japanese black gun, unavailable here). 5. I love my black gun!**

KEITH CHEGWIN

Dear Gus,
I bet my friend that you wouldn't answer my letter so don't print this or I'll lose money!
1. What happened to the cheaper white Saturn? When's it coming out over here?
2. When it does come out, will we get the cool white Japanese pads or the clunky black 'play with mittens on' English ones?
3. I'm thinking about getting my Saturn fixed to run import games. Does playing on a Scart system really make that much of a difference?
4. What do you think of the Nintendo 64?
Paul Leopold, Kent
GUS: **1. Sega are not releasing the 'Flash Saturn' over here. The machine will be internally rearranged but use a black casing. 2. The pads are being changed to Japanese-style dainty ones. 3. Yes, if your telly runs at 60Hz, you get a fuller picture and faster gameplay. 4. Nice, unavailable and has only two games.**



MARK LITTLE

Dear Angus,
1. Is it true that Virtua Fighter 3 is coming out on the Saturn?
2. If so, how good a conversion can we expect?
3. I'm a big fan of Capcom fighting games. When are Street Fighter Alpha 2, Marvel Super Heroes, Aliens Vs Predators and Powerbots going to be released?
4. I'm also a big fan of Neo Geo fighting games. Will we see the brilliant King Of Fighters '95 over here?
5. Why don't Sega use the SNK memory cartridge for other games, like Virtua Fighter 3?



Cheers matey,
Gary Potter, Somerset
GUS: **1. Sega confirmed VF3 at E3 for some time in 1997. 2. At that time Yu Suzuki made a statement that AM2 would not convert any arcade game it could not do justice to on Saturn in terms of gameplay. They obviously think they can. 3. Alpha 2 and Marvel Super Heroes will get Japanese releases before the end of the year. 4. In October/November. 5. Capcom have decided to adopt that system for all their new conversions.**

KIM WILDE

Dear Q&A,
1. What happened to Doom on the Saturn? How long are we going to have to wait?
2. Have you seen anything of it yet? Is it as good as the PlayStation version?



3. When it does come out, will it feature a link-up mode like the PlayStation? It'd bloody well better!
4. Any other Doom style games on the horizon? What about Quake and Hexen?
Craig Baxley, Durham
GUS: **1. GT intend an autumn release (Oct/Nov) but we've still to see anything. 3. It's possible, as the cable technology exists.
4. There are two excellent ones reviewed this issue.**



VANESSA

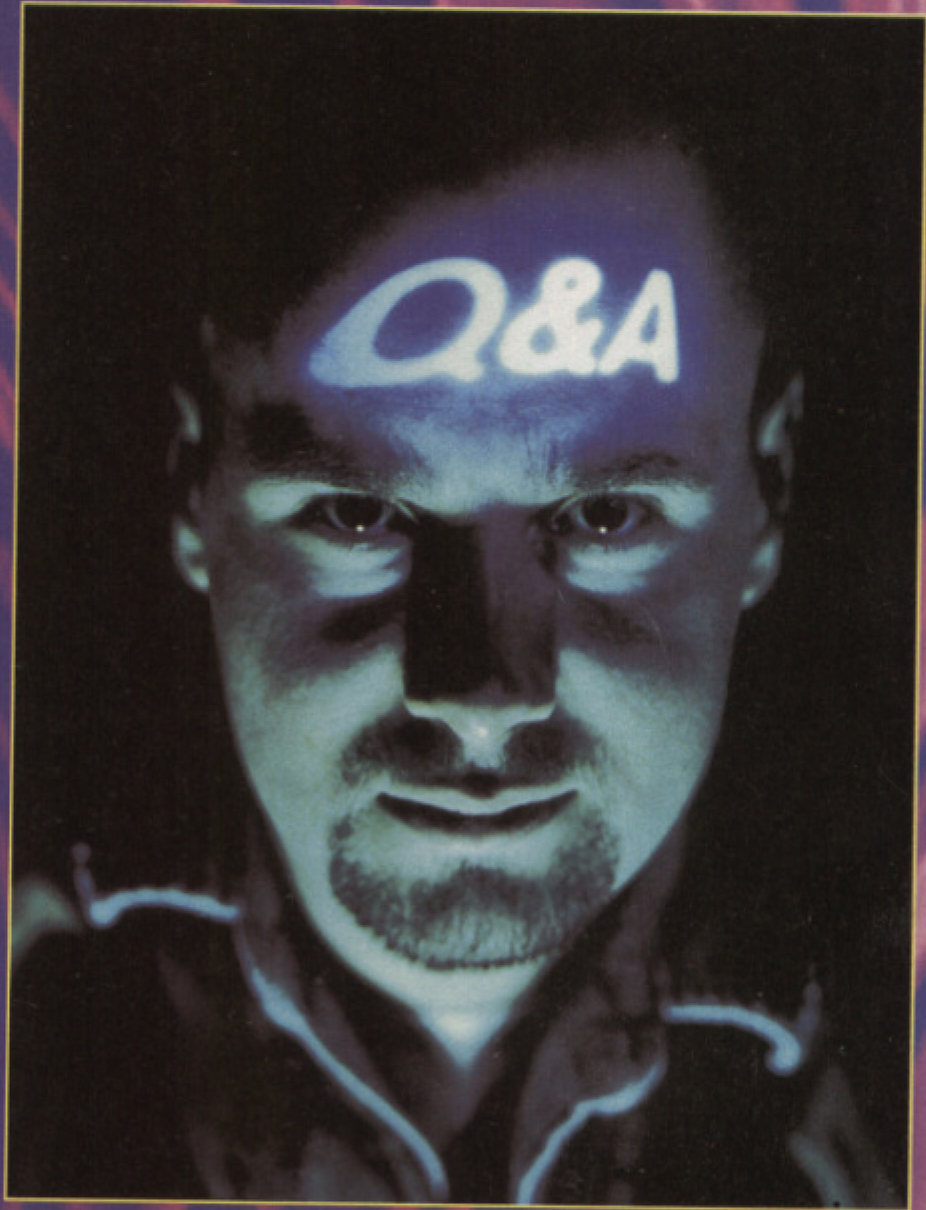
Dear Gus
I bought my Saturn on they day it came out, and I've been a Sega enthusiast ever since. However, recently I saw an N64 running in my local games shop and I have to say it looks absolutely brilliant! Now, I'm in a dilemma. I'm really looking forward to games like Fighting Vipers, Nights and Virtua Cop 2, but Mario 64 is just soooo incredible. I haven't got enough cash to get both systems? What should I do? (honestly!!!)
Bradley Dunne, Bristol
GUS: **Let's face some facts. Nintendo 64 is not out here until spring 1997. It has only two games. Yes, these are good, but when are the next excellent titles out? You'll be paying through the nose for the next year. Saturn will have two hundred titles by Christmas. Many of these are unmissable for real gamesplayers. We have N64s in the office, and they are great fun, but I'd honestly spend money on my Saturn at the moment.**

ZOE BALL

Dear Gus,
1. You said that the 32X is dead. What about the Megadrive?
2. What's been the best Megadrive game over the past few months? (I've got Toy Story already)
3. Weren't England robbed in Euro '96?
4. So which do you reckon is the best footy game on the Megadrive then?
5. What are your top three Megadrive games of all time?
6. I'm really looking forward to Sonic 3D. Any news?
7. What's the cheapest price you've seen a Saturn at?
Daniel Swayne, Manchester
GUS: 1. **Less and less is happening on the Megadrive, but the quality is improving. Sonic 3-D and Micro Machines are going to be incredible games.
2. Brian Lara '96
3. No, being Scots I can see this more clearly than you can. They simply failed to score enough goals to beat Germany. How should they then make the next round?
4. Fifa '95
5. Micro Machines '96, Psycho Pinball and Megalomania.
6. A massive feature next month.
7. £125 (In Japan)**

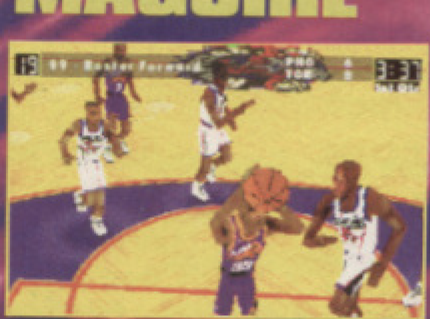
JULIA CARLING

Dear Guz,
We've been sending letters for months. We've tried being nice but now we want an answer, alright?
1. Which is better: Mario 64 or Nights?
2. How about Tekken 2 and Virtua Fighter 2?
3. Is that blue bloke with Q&A on his head really you?
4. Tomb Raider looks ace, but we heard its coming out on PlayStation first. Say it ain't so?
5. Have you tried Worcester Source flavoured Twiglets yet? They're lush
Elsdon Brothers, London
GUS: 1. They are incomparable. 2. VF2. 3. Oh, yes! 4. IT AIN'T SO! Sega have bought up the publishing rights to make it a SATURN FIRST. 5. I doubt it.





SEAN MAGUIRE



Dearest Gus,
Your last issue was a bit on the 'light' side, but answer these questions and I'll forgive you.
1. How many link up games have there been for the Saturn? Are they any good?
2. Will the link up cable ever come out officially?
3. What's the best multi-tap game so far?
4. When's Saturn Bomberman coming out?
5. Great mag. Keep up the good work!
Jeremy Pedley, Farnham
GUS: Last month reflected the lack of brilliant games in the quietest period of the year. You find us back to health this month. 1. One, a dismal effort called Gebockers (import only). 2. Late this year. 3. NBA Action is excellent with a tap. 4. We'll review it next issue! Official release at Christmas (hopefully).

Well, that's another round of satisfied customers sent packing. Tune in next month for a another round of 'Beat The Incredible Tony Mesmer'. Ta da!

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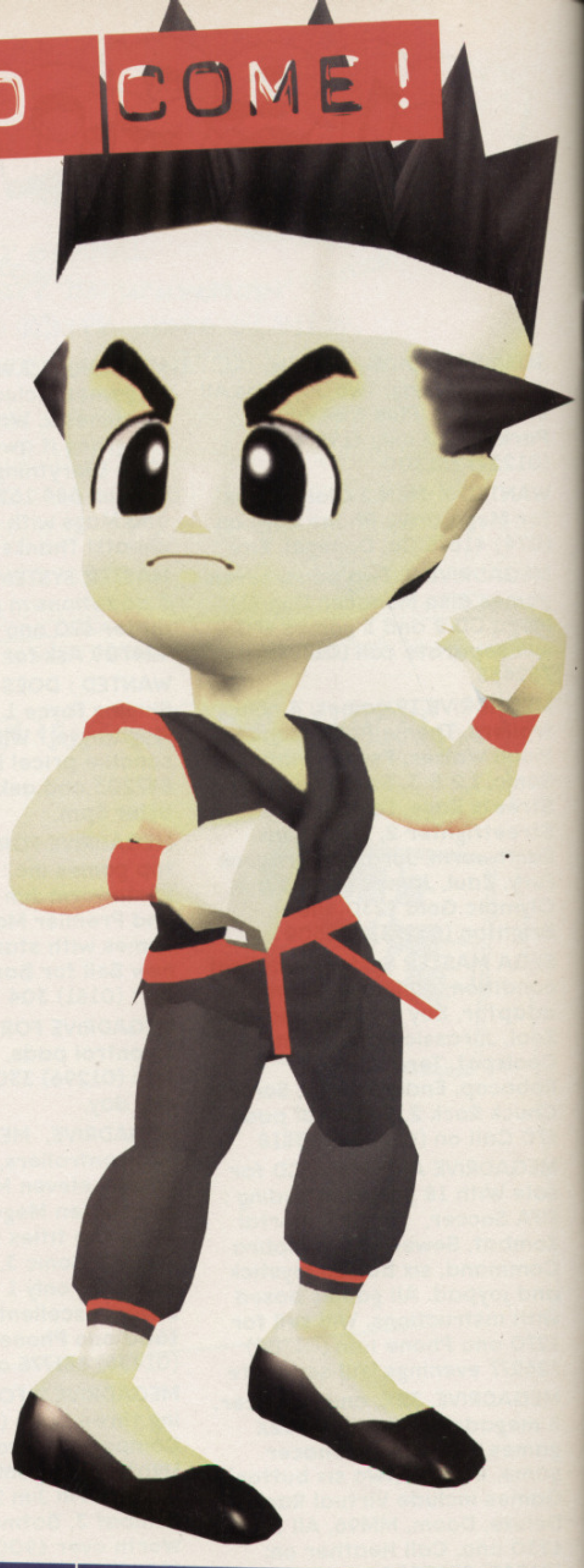
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This is going to a be surprisingly awesome. Three games in one, and they are all good.

SONIC 3-D

Now you get the real deal on this massive Megadrive game. We reveal the amazing graphics work done by traveller's Tales.

BLAM: MACHINEHEAD

Core sure do know how to make a good shoot 'em up. Does this gritty piece of work have their magic touch. You will find out.

STREET RACER

Ubi Soft are going to get eight of us in a room to play with each other. An uncensored report of our filthy fun next issue!

WORLDWIDE SOCCER

You've heard so much about so many 'the best ever soccer game'. Now witness the real 'best ever soccer game'!

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